

BUILDING THE OLD CONTEMPTIBLES: BRITISH MILITARY
TRANSFORMATION AND TACTICAL DEVELOPMENT
FROM THE BOER WAR TO THE GREAT WAR
1899-1914

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

BUILDING THE OLD CONTEMPTIBLES: BRITISH MILITARY TRANSFORMATION AND TACTICAL DEVELOPMENT FROM THE BOER WAR TO THE GREAT WAR, 1899-1914, by Andrew J. Risio, 131 pages.

Impressed with the tactical lessons of the Boer War, the British Army reformed its doctrine and training from 1899 to 1914, deploying a combat ready force, the “Old Contemptibles” of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in 1914. Because of these changes, the BEF played a crucial role in Belgium and France in 1914. The lessons of the Boer War guided the British Army and its interwar reforms. The doctrine and training developed from 1902-1914 was a significant improvement over the pre-Boer War British colonial warfare tactics. With Haldane’s organizational reforms and Robert’s new doctrine, the British Army built the Old Contemptibles of the BEF. The battles of 1914 showed the BEF was the equal of any European contemporary in quality of its tactics and doctrine. The comparison of the BEF to the other combatants in 1914 does not stand in stark contrast. The BEF performed well but no better or worse than comparable German or French units did. What does stand in stark contrast is the BEF in 1914 when compared with the expedition to South Africa in 1899. The years of reform between these two expeditions were truly a crucible that built the Old Contemptibles.

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ACRONYMS

BEF	British Expeditionary Force
CID	The Committee of Imperial Defense
IGS	The Imperial General Staff
RUSI	The Royal United Service Institution
SAR	South African Republic, also known as the Transvaal
SMLE	Short, Magazine, Lee Enfield Mark I Rifle

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

For England to have been surprised by a Continental War in her 1899 state of readiness would have been a national tragedy that to-day barely allows contemplation. The South African War was a lesson, a bitter one, but to the credit of the entire nation the lesson was learnt and was not ignored.¹

Colonel John K. Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army 1899-1914*, 1938

[The British Expeditionary Force] had profited from the South African experience and from the post war reforms, particularly the creation of a General Staff. It had developed tactical skills which were relevant to the new conditions of warfare and had trained systematically at section, company, and divisional level. It had acquired, above all, a new organizational framework and a sense of purpose from the Haldane reforms. As the official history of the First World War recalled, it was 'incomparably the best trained, best organized, and best equipped British Army which ever went forth to war.'²

David G. Chandler, *The Oxford History of the British Army*, 1994

Background

On 14 October 1899, the *Dunottar Castle* set sail from England carrying General Sir Redvers Henry Buller and the initial British Army forces deploying to support the garrison forces already engaged in fighting the Boers in South Africa. The conflict would be a bloody struggle against an army of European settlers equipped with modern small arms and artillery. It marked the end of the small colonial wars of the Victorian era. The end of the war would also mark the beginning of a shift in British strategy away from colonial warfare and towards continental warfare.

Less than twelve years after the end of the Boer War, General Sir John French, himself a Boer War veteran, departed England leading the British Expeditionary Force

(BEF) to reinforce French forces already engaged in fighting the Germans in France and Belgium. The differences between these two forces were significant. The BEF of 1914 was tactically, technically and professionally a much superior force than the one that departed for South Africa in 1899. The years between these two events were a crucible for the British Army. It reformed both the active Army and its reserves, drastically changing the structure and purpose of the Army. Continental warfare became the primary focus of the Army and, while duty in India continued to dominate the Army experience, colonial duty diminished in importance. The Army adopted new technology and sought new tactics while it underwent strategic and organizational transformation that built the BEF.

The Army that deployed in 1899 was a product of the era that began with the wars to defeat Napoleon and ended with the Boer War. Waterloo and Wellington would cast long shadows over British military development for the first half of this period until the Crimean War. In between these two events, the ever expanding empire called and the Army responded. Frequent small wars in far away colonies marked most of the Victorian Era. The Army was engaged in active campaigning in one location or another every year of Queen Victoria's reign except for 1883. The Crimean War was the one major exception to the rule of colonial warfare between the end of the Battle of Waterloo and beginning of the Boer War. The war against Russia was a disaster for the British Army, especially its commissary service, and generated a series of reforms for the British Army brought on by the Roebuck Committee among other parliamentary investigations of the war. Most of the reforms of this period focused on the administrative side of the Army and included consolidation of military matters under the War Office and military control

of the commissariat. After the Crimean War and these reforms, the Army returned to its colonial focus.

By the 1890s in South Africa, the British Army had fought a series of small wars against several African tribes, most notably the Zulus, and the Boers. After several years of an uneasy peace between the Boers and the British Empire, the British Colonial Government of Cape Colony coerced the Boer Republics into open conflict with the British Empire. When the Boer War began in 1899, the Army initially performed poorly. With the initiation of hostilities, the Boers invaded the British colonies of Natal and Cape Colony. Along the way, they defeated the British colonial garrison forces in several engagements, forced an entire column of cavalry to surrender and laid siege to the British colonial towns of Mafeking, Kimberley and Ladysmith. The British performance did not improve significantly with the arrival of General Buller and his force from England. Over the next two years, the Army learned many hard lessons, mostly from battlefield defeats at the hands of Boers farmers and militiamen.

Eventually under the direction of Lord Frederick Roberts and Lord Horatio H. Kitchener, the British were able to turn the tide on the Boers. The occupation of the Boer capitol of Pretoria and surrender of the standing Boer Army by the end of 1900 did not end the war but simply moved it into its second phase of guerilla warfare that would last another year. During the three years of war, the British Army reformed its tactics significantly. These reforms included the introduction of mounted infantry and the use of entrenchments on the defense. The strategy used in the later portions of the war heavily reflected these tactical reforms. During the conflict, the command and the soldiers

adapted, improvised, and eventually overcame a dedicated, determined and, initially, well equipped foe.

The war in 1899 was actually the second war to occur between the Boers and the British. The First Boer War occurred in 1881 and ended in a defeat of the British at Majuba Hill. The second conflict is often referred to as the Second South African War, the Second Anglo-Boer War, the Great Boer War, the War in South Africa and various other names. Modern histories frequently refer to it as the Anglo-Boer War. Because many of the original source materials and several of the major works that contribute to this thesis prefer the term Boer War, this paper shall use the more universally accepted title of “the Boer War” for this second war that occurred between 1899 and 1902.

At the end of the Boer War, the British Government directed a Royal Commission to look critically at British Army’s performance in the Boer War. The Royal Commission’s *Report on the War in South Africa* began the introspective examination of the Army’s preparedness for the war, the conduct of the campaigns and the overall quality of the British soldier and his equipment. Additionally, Lord Roberts oversaw a complete rewriting of British doctrine starting with *Combined Training* published in 1902. These two events began a huge shift in focus for the military and eventually influenced every level of the British Army over the next twelve years.

The BEF in 1914, unlike its predecessor in South Africa fifteen years earlier, was well prepared, trained and equipped to face their foe upon disembarkation in Europe. It immediately proved effective and even crucial in the defeat of the German Schlieffen Plan during the later summer and fall of 1914. What is even more remarkable is unlike either the German, French or Russian forces, Great Britain participated in only one

European conflict, the Crimean War, in the hundred years leading up to the Great War. When compared to the opponent it faced, the BEF performed remarkably. During the first hundred days of World War I, from September to December 1914, the BEF held a front that often faced “an enemy four to seven times their strength.”³ Additionally, the enemy was a determined and well-trained European army, unlike the colonial enemies the British had faced for the last fifty years. Yet the “Old Contemptibles” not only held the line but also eventually stopped the German 1st Army on the Marne.

The Old Contemptibles was the name the British Army veterans adopted for themselves after word got out of a comment attributed to Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany. When the Kaiser heard that the BEF was holding up his forces executing the Schlieffen Plan, he disparaged the small force as the “contemptible British Army.”⁴ In the later years, the name differentiated among those new soldiers of Kitchener’s Army and the veterans of the old BEF. After the war, reunions of the original members of the BEF solidified the nickname and the Old Contemptibles became the term used to refer to the British soldiers of the original BEF that deployed to France in the summer of 1914.

However, this success was not without a cost for the BEF. The initial BEF that deployed to France in 1914 was, by the end of the year, decimated. By December of 1914, the BEF had lost over 89,000 soldiers from an original force that deployed in August of just over 110,000. They had played a crucial role in defeating the Schlieffen Plan but in so doing, combat had destroyed the BEF as an effective fighting force. The British Army would not conduct major offensive operations again until the spring of 1915, once the Indian Army troops, Dominion troops and Kitchener’s Volunteers arrived and became part of the BEF. By December, the old Regular Army and a large portion of

the standing Reserves, simply ceased to exist. The legacy of the tactical reform of 1902-1914 was lost on the new army raised in England to replace the losses of the BEF.

While there have been several studies of the influence on the British military establishment of the Boer War and many more on the events inside the British Army in the years leading up to the First World War, few have drawn the connection directly from the battlefields of the Boer War to the tactical experiences of the BEF in 1914. The British military reforms of the interwar period changed the overall structure and logistics of the British Army, especially concerning the Reserves and Yeomanry. What is seldom discussed is whether the new tactics, if any, that accompanied these new structures were as successful. In *The Development of the British Army 1899-1914* written in 1938, Colonel John Dunlop, of the British Territorial Army, stated that the lessons of the Boer War were what directly led to the BEF and its preparedness for war in 1914. Colonel Dunlop, a reserve officer himself, focused heavily on the overarching reforms of the structure of the British Army during this period with special emphasis on the Reserves. However, he emphasized the strategic reforms and only examined the tactical changes on a cursory level. When the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) arrived in France in August 1914, it was certainly better organized and equipped than the force that Great Britain deployed to South Africa in 1899. The question was whether it was better trained tactically and were its leaders better prepared for the Great War than they had been for the Boer War. The official British Army history of World War I, as quoted above from *The Oxford History of the British Army*, claimed that the British Army was the best-prepared force ever deployed from Britain. This was because of the lessons learned twelve years earlier out on the veldt.

Several recent historians have reviewed the lessons of the Boer War. The perspective of almost a century provides insight when compared with the lessons as the British saw them at the time. In his book *The Quest for Decisive Victory*, Robert Centino saw that, “within virtually all European armies, ‘Boer Tactics,’ essentially replacing lines and columns with extended fronts of skirmishers, became the dominant order of attack prescribed by the tactical manuals.”⁵ He also notes that several key factors influence military development of the British Army over the next twelve years. These included: (1) the extended lines in offense and defense required on the modern battlefield, (2) the difficulty in commanding these extended lines, (3) reconnaissance becoming the primary job of cavalry to support commanding these extended lines, (4) a need for increased mobility, (5) the need for individual leadership at the small unit level.⁶ In *Command and Cohesion, the Citizen Soldier and Minor Tactics in the British Army, 1870-1914*, M. A. Ramsay saw many of the same issues as Centino. He also saw the most serious error by the British was the under appreciation of infantry firepower in the modern age. Smokeless powder made observation of an entrenched enemy almost impossible. He saw that this required increased reconnaissance on the offense. Scouting the enemy’s location was of paramount important on the offense. The failure of the British infantry to utilize ground cover during the assault was a significant lesson taken away from the Boer War.⁷ Brian Bond, in *The Victorian Army and the Staff College 1854-1914*, observed that during the war commanders often ignored their staffs and did the work themselves. Even Lord Kitchener saw this fault. As Bond put it, “if it did nothing else the South African War revealed the foolishness of such an attitude.”⁸

Many studies tend to focus on the Boer War and the changes it brought about or

they focus on the changes in the years leading up to the First World War. A classic examples of the Boer War focused studies include Colonel Dunlop's book mentioned above and Jay Stone and Erwin Schmidl's *The Boer War and Military Reforms*.⁹ Similar to Dunlop, Schmidl and Stone focused on the larger strategic changes in England. Additionally, they discussed the impacts of the Boer War on other European nations (with special emphasis on the Austrian Army.)

Few have studied the threads connecting the Boer War to the First World War. Few have focused on the British Army's own internal debate on tactics that followed 1902 and continued up until the outbreak of war in August 1914. With the Royal Commission on the South African War focused primarily on the strategic reforms of the Army and recommending structural and logistical changes, Lord Roberts and later General Haig oversaw the rewriting of British Army regulations and tactics. The debate and discussion that followed in the *Army Review*, *Journal of the Royal Service Institution* and *Army Annual*, and its influence on training and doctrine development prior to 1914 offers unique insights for today's officer on how a modern military implements or disregards tactical lessons learned from recent armed conflict.

This study focuses on the tactics and the debate surrounding those tactics. There are a number of excellent studies into the transformation of the British Army's grand strategy, structure and policies at the macro level during this period. This thesis will focus on the tying those strategic changes to the developments at the tactical level. The thesis addresses overarching strategic changes as they influence the tactical changes.

The thesis relies heavily on accounts in the various service journals of the time. These will be compared and contrasted with the official reports of training from the

higher commands published in the Army Annual. The study will focus heavily on the actual changes in doctrine, from the original pre-Boer War doctrine in *Infantry Drill, 1896* through the baseline new doctrine in *Combine Training 1902* to the capstone doctrine in *Field Service Regulation, 1909*.¹⁰ This development was the first significant attempt by the British to create a unified doctrine for all the field forces. The British Army heavily debated and discussed the merits of the various subsequent doctrinal regulations published over the next decade in the various military journals. This discussion will play an important part in this thesis.

Thesis Statement

Significantly impressed with the tactical lessons of the Boer War, the British Army reformed its doctrine and training from 1902-1914 and deployed a combat ready force, the Old Contemptibles of the BEF in 1914. Because of these changes, the BEF played a crucial role in the defeat of the Schlieffen Plan and the prevention of a quick German victory in the fall and early winter of 1914.

Outline

The first chapter will serve as the introduction to the thesis and will outline the limitations, delimitations and purpose of the thesis. It will also outline the thesis structure and cover a few related theses and published works on the subject.

The second chapter will address the Boer War and the lessons learned by the British Army from that experience. The strategic or overarching lessons of the war will be address but only as they influence and affect the tactical lessons. The Royal Commission's Report is the starting point, but not the sole source, used in identifying the tactical lessons of the war. Additionally, this chapter will examine some of the changes

that occurred while the war was ongoing. Key to this chapter will be whether the British Army identified these lessons as applicable to colonial or continental war (or both.)

The third chapter will focus on the official army reforms from 1902 to 1914. The focus will be on the tactical changes forced by the strategic reforms of the period. This chapter will examine whether or not these reforms occurred due to specific lessons learned, from the Boer War or other conflicts of the period (notably the Russo-Japanese War).

The fourth chapter will cover the interwar debate in the journals and training publications of the time. The articles on tactics and reviews of publications filled the professional journals of the time that allow insight into the ongoing debate during this period. Many junior and senior officers published training guides for officers to use in training their troops. These publications provide significant insight into how the army received the new doctrine and how the army implemented it.

The fifth chapter will cover the BEF experience in France in the fall and winter of 1914. Specifically it will examine the tactical experience of the army as it applied the training and doctrine developed after the Boer War. It will answer the basic question, “Did the British Army get the kind of war its doctrine envisioned it fighting?”

The final chapter will serve as the conclusion for the thesis. It will draw together the lessons from the Boer War; how they influenced the doctrine and training between the wars; and how this affected the performance of the BEF in the opening months of World War I.

¹Colonel John K. Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army 1899-1914* (London: Methuen, 1938), 306.

²David G. Chandler, *The Oxford History of the British Army* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 210.

³Anthony Farrar-Hockley, *Death of an Army* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1968), 180.

⁴John Terraine, *Mons: the Retreat to Victory* (London: Cooper, 1991), 65.

⁵Robert M. Citino, *The Quest for Decisive Victory* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 54.

⁶*Ibid.*, 56.

⁷M. A. Ramsay, *Command and Cohesion: The Citizen Soldier and Minor Tactics in the British Army, 1870-1918* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002), 89.

⁸Brian Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College 1854-1914* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972), 182.

⁹Jay Stone and Erwin A. Schmidl, *The Boer War and Military Reform* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1988).

¹⁰Great Britain War Office, *Field Regulations: Combined Training 1902* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1902).

CHAPTER 2

THE BOER WAR AND LESSONS LEARNED

But the true lesson of the war in our opinion is, that no military system will be satisfactory which does not contain powers of expansion outside the limit of regular forces of the crown, whatever that limit may be.¹

The Royal Commission, *Report on the War in South Africa* 1903

I would earnestly caution all and sundry against accepting as military gospel the “deductions” and “lessons” set forth by certain scribes, whose true realms are those of fiction and who are not qualified to “deduce” in any way from what they saw or imagined.²

Captain H. T. Russell, R.F.A., *The Employment of Artillery with Other Arms* 1902

By the end of the Boer War, the British Army had over 448,000 men in arms in South Africa of which the majority were volunteers, reservists and colonials. The colonials were primarily British Colonial Units formed from white colonist, Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders and pro-British South Africans. The entire prewar British Army numbered only 246,000 Regular Army soldiers in 1899 and not all deployed to South Africa.³ The force in South Africa had fought the war on the veldt for three years and up until this time, it was the largest British Army ever raised and maintained by Great Britain on foreign soil.⁴ The question that faced the British Government and the Army was, would the lessons of three years of hard fighting be lost or would they record these lessons and used them to improve the Army?

Victorian Reform

Before answering this question, one needs to understand the earlier reforms of the British Army during the Victorian Era. While the British Army implemented many

reforms during this era, few of these reforms dealt directly with tactical military issues. Most of them focused on reforming the structure of the Army like the Cardwell System of matched battalions⁵, the administration of the Army as with the reorganization of the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies after the Crimean War⁶ or the strategic planning of the Army like the creation of the Reserves after the Indian Mutinies.⁷

Prior to the Boer War, few of the reforms focused on changing the tactics of the British Army, the way in which the soldiers actually fought. There are two main reasons why. First, the wars of this period were, largely, colonial affairs. Throughout most of the Victorian period, Britain either had superiority in technology, tactics or both. Few native armies had the technology to beat the British. One of the most stunning examples of technological superiority was at Rorke's Drift during the Zulu War in 1879, where 139 British Army regulars armed with repeating rifles held off an army of several thousand Zulus armed with spears. While exact Zulu casualties are unknown, the Zulus left over 400 dead on the field and most likely, several thousand more killed and injured. The British detachment lost only 15 soldiers for this victory.⁸ British tactical superiority over colonial natives was apparent in the continued successful use by the British of infantry squares long after other European armies had abandoned this tactic as obsolete.⁹ The Battle of Omdurman best demonstrated the combined superiority in tactics and technology in 1898. Lord Kitchener's force of over just over 25,000 men including only 8,000 British regulars armed with machine guns and modern artillery defeated the Mahdi's army of 52,000 men, inflicting over 11,000 casualties while receiving only 48 fatalities amongst his own force.¹⁰ With demonstrated superior technology and/or tactics over the decades of colonial warfare, reform was not necessary at the tactical level. When

defeat occurred, it was because of a strategic or administrative error that did not bring enough forces or technology to the battlefield to ensure a British victory.

The second reason why the British aimed at the administrative and strategic side of the Army was the sheer number of successes when compared with very few failures during this period. Not all British actions during the Victorian era were successful, the massacre of almost 1,400 soldiers at Isandhlwana in 1879 shortly before the defense of Rorke's Drift is probably the best example, but a string of successes often followed each defeat. This left little cause to believe the problem revolved around the tactics used. The cause of the failure was obviously elsewhere, not with the tactics, as in Isandhlwana where the quartermasters and the ammunition boxes shared part of the blame for the defeat. The quartermasters had been slow to issue ammunition because of bureaucratic attitudes concerning issuance of supplies and ammunition boxes that secured with screws and not nails thus taking much longer to open.¹¹ Even though modern study of the battle discounts this theory of the defeat, (it was more likely that the tactic of fighting in squares, limiting the British ability to mass their firepower, that caused the defeat) it further demonstrates the tendency of the British to blame defeats on administrative problems rather than on poor tactics. The British did not look to a failure in tactics or technology because just a few days later the small force at Rorke's Drift, one-tenth the size of the Isandhlwana force, defeated the same Zulu Army. The problem was obviously somewhere else. So the defeats were laid at the feet of the commander, the War Office or the administration, so when it came time to reform, it was the structure, the administration or the strategic aims of the Army that were reformed not the tactics.

The Boer War had been different. The British possessed neither the technological

superiority nor the tactical superiority to defeat the Boers. While lacking the discipline of a European army, the Boers were European colonists, armed with German rifles and modern artillery. Even with this parity in technology, the British Army consistently outnumbered the Boers, at times ten to one. Yet the defeats far outnumbered the victories in the war and it dragged on for three long years. So what was the cause of these failures? Why did the British continue to lose the tactical fight only winning in the end by sheer overwhelming numbers, a burnt earth policy and the invention of the concentration camp?

This complex problem was what faced the British Government in 1902. The British Government established three separate commissions to investigate the lessons of the war and study reform of the Army. While only the first commission, the Eglin Commission, was tied to the Boer War, it directly led to the appointment of the two subsequent commissions and all three traced their founding back to the turmoil of the Boer War.

The Elgin Commission

The King convened the first commission in August of 1902 and formally named it the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa. Commonly referred to as the Elgin Commission, the commission assumed the name of its chairman, Lord Elgin. The Elgin Commission studied the Boer War and recommended some tactical, strategic and administrative changes to the Army. The Commission submitted its final report in 1903.¹² Being a commission of record and not a commission of advice, the Elgin Commission favored reporting the facts and findings from the Boer War over making recommendations for change.¹³ The commission relied heavily on interviews with senior

field officers from the war, often quoting Roberts, Kitchener, Baden-Powell, among others.

The commission did not emphasize the reforms required of the Army after the war. The commission instead emphasized what had happened and what was successful and what was found wanting among the organization, equipment and personnel of the British Army. While most of the areas reviewed covered the spectrum from substandard to satisfactory, the commission found that the logistics of mobilization had been the most successful operations of the war. The Army executed mobilization better than any other single activity during the Boer War. The commission observed that the mobilization, the largest in British history up to that point, went “smoothly and with remarkable dispatch.”¹⁴ The lack of problems immediately after the issue of the mobilization orders at the start of the war surprised the staff in the War Office who had expected the mobilizing units to inundate the war office with questions and issues. Colonel F. S. Robb, present in the War Office at the time, commented on the uneventful mobilization to the commission, “I think I may say that I have never known such an absolutely quiet time at the War Office as immediately after the issue of mobilization orders.”¹⁵ The Army maintained this high standard in mobilization throughout the interwar period up to and including the mobilization in 1914.

A primary area of discussion for the commission was the quality of the men. The commission found that the quality of the men, non-commissioned officers and officers was, overall, satisfactory. In particular, the commission found the Regular Army soldiers quite proficient at the profession of arms. The commission often used the terms “excellent” to characterize the Regular Army personnel, “satisfactory” for the Reserves,

and “poor” for the condition of new recruits.¹⁶ These statements in this report significantly influenced the interwar debate on conscription and the reserves.

The quality of the personnel assigned to the force was a critical issue for the commissioners. They saw the need for intelligence and wit as a requirement of every soldier on the modern battlefield. They viewed this as one of the key lessons from the war. In the commission’s opinion, “That the conditions of modern warfare with long-range arms and smokeless powder involve an immense extension of lines of battle, diminish the power of control by commanding officers, and increase the degree of individual intelligence required in each individual private.”¹⁷ Every soldier on the future battlefield would be required to have intelligence and initiative to do his mission. Lord Kitchener, in his testimony to the commission, felt some of the blame for the deficiencies in this area was due to the rigid training system of the past, “mechanical perfection had been cultivated at the expense of individual resourcefulness.”¹⁸ This finding cast a long shadow over the interwar debate.

Marksmanship was a significant deficiency that many attributed to this same rigid mechanical perfection of drill in the prewar army. Prior to the Boer War, the British Army not only referenced volley fire in its regulations but also practiced it in the field. Addressing the commission, Lieutenant General Methuen, who had commanded a division in South Africa, saw the issue as, “Good shooting, accurate judging of distance and intelligent use of ground are the very essence of success on the modern battlefield.”¹⁹

Tied to accurate fire was maneuvering and entrenching. Initially, use of cover and entrenchment was poor. The British Army had not faced a significant modern artillery threat since the Crimean War. The army placed little emphasis on entrenching prior to the

war but rapid improvement over its course was the rule. The commission identified entrenching as an important tactic that the soldiers completely adopted on their own. By the war's end, soldiers entrenched upon taking a new position "as a matter of course."²⁰ The commission voiced a single concern regarding entrenchment "that it was sometimes difficult to get men to leave good cover when a forward movement was needed."²¹

The commission left unanswered one of the most hotly debated issues across the continent for the next decade. How to cross the "killing zone" would be the single most pressing debate for the military establishment of most European nations well into the First World War. It was the very essence of the problem of firepower versus will. Unfortunately, the commission decided to defer any judgment on this contentious issue and instead left the interpretation of the lessons on this up to the military experts.²²

The most significant and universally agreed finding on cavalry from the Boer War was the rise of the rifle as the primary weapon of the cavalryman. The lance would never again assume primacy as the main weapon of the cavalry and the sword would now assume a secondary role. Early in the war, the Army had replaced the carbine originally issued to the cavalry with standard infantry rifle, the Lee-Enfield. As Sir Ian Hamilton commented to the commission, "compared to a modern rifle the sword or lance can only be regarded as a mediaeval toy."²³

The role of the cavalry and that of the new Mounted Infantry were not as clear. During the later stages of the war, during the guerilla campaigns, Lord Kitchener mounted regular infantry formations on horseback to provide mobility in the wide-open spaces of the veldt. The horse was merely an implement of transportation and not used in combat. The infantry rode to the battlefield, dismounted and fought as infantry. The

openness of the African veldt drove these tactics. The tactics of Mounted Infantry also utilized skills already resident in most of the colonial troops the British used in this role like the Australian, New Zealand and Canadian troops. Recruited from largely rural areas, they were inherently more experienced with horses than the traditionally urban British soldier was. The British cavalry had continued in its traditional reconnaissance and scouting roles. The general findings of the commission concluded that the cavalry should maintain the sword but be trained with the rifle and taught to fight on foot while maintaining their reconnaissance and scouting missions. Additionally, the commission felt the British Army should maintain the mounted infantry forces trained in basic horsemanship.²⁴

The last major area discussed by the commission was staff officers. Most of the staffs in South Africa had been ad hoc organizations with officers unfamiliar with each other and the general for whom they worked. The commission determined that “the necessity of training in peace with a fuller compliment of troops and more spacious grounds over which to maneuver,” was necessary to train the staffs of division and corps size organizations.²⁵

As noted in the quote at the start of the chapter, the Eglin Commission did address the issue of expansion of the Regular Army using the Militia Forces and volunteers. While this was important for interwar reform, it brought about the Norfolk Commission that directly dealt with these strategic issues.

The Norfolk Commission

In April 1903, the King chartered the Norfolk Commission to, “Enquire into the organization and terms of service of our Militia and Volunteer Forces, and to report

whether any, and if any, what changes are required.”²⁶ This commission served as an advisory commission to the War Office, recommending changes to the Militia and Reserves but the commission widened the scope of its warrant in May 1903. It investigated the question of Home Defense, which it saw as integral to its study of the reserve forces. Prior to this commission, Home Defense was the primary mission of the reserves.²⁷ Before the Norfolk Commission, the Stanhope Memorandum, dated 1 June 1891, laid out the strategic guidance for the Army. The main influence of the document on army arrangements derived from the last paragraph of the memorandum. It stated:

But it will be distinctly understood that the probability of the employment of an Army Corps in the field in any European war is sufficiently improbable to make it the primary duty of military authorities to organize our forces efficiently for the defence of this country.²⁸

The Norfolk Commission changed this. It found that the Navy was primarily responsible for British Imperial Defense, including the defense of the home islands. This meant that the Regular Army would be relieved of Home Defense and opened the way for the creation of the Territorial Army and the British Expeditionary Force. Defense of the home islands would no longer be the primary strategic guidance to the Army. Creation of an expeditionary force to fight in a European would be. This commission heavily influenced the restructuring of the British Army during this period.

The Esher Commission

By the time the Eglin Commission had submitted its report on 9 July 1903, cabinet changes required a replacement for the Secretary of State for War. This individual would rebuild the War Office upon lines seen as necessary by the Eglin Commission Report. The King and Prime Minister both requested that Lord Esher, of the Eglin Commission, accept the post. Lord Esher refused, stating that he would be better able to

enact change working outside of the War Office. As a result, the King charted the Esher Committee. Unlike the Eglin Commission and the Norfolk Commission, which reported to the War Office, the Eglin Commission reported directly to the Prime Minister. This allowed Lord Esher to oversee Army Reform from outside of the War Office.²⁹

Formally titled the War Office Reconstruction Committee, the Esher Commission's charter was to study reorganization of the War Office. A significant difference between the Elgin and the Esher Commissions, the Esher Committee advised the Prime Minister on changes to the War Office while the Elgin Commission saw its responsibility to report facts to the War Office.³⁰ The Esher Commission focused on the structure and administrative reforms for the War Office.

Military Lessons Learned

Lord Roberts complained that Parliament never asked the Army for the lessons of the war instead relying on the commissions working outside of the Army to do the work for the Army. While the British Army did not file any official reports on the lessons learned from the Boer War, it is possible from professional journals, testimony before these commissions and several Army Committees formed by Roberts upon assuming office as Commander and Chief of the Army to note the commonly accepted lessons the British Army took away from the war.³¹

When it came to artillery, the British found themselves woefully outgunned at almost every major engagement of the Boer War. As pointed out by Sir Charles Dilke, a member of the Esher Commission, when reporting to the Royal United Service Institute on the commission's report, "the commission failed to give good guidance" concerning the poor state of British field guns in rate of fire, range and numbers.³² The field artillery

and heavy guns of the British forces were poor counterparts to the Krupp and Creusot guns of the Boers. In fact, the British Army had to rely on the Navy to provide mobile naval guns and detachments to man them, in order to provide heavy artillery support during the war because the Army simply lacked heavy artillery.³³

Smokeless powder and increased small arms range led to a number of lessons on tactics. These included: (1) an increased depth of the fire zone, (2) more open formations, (3) an increase use of cover, (4) detailed study of the ground by leaders and staff, (5) increased use of artificial shelter or entrenchment by both the offense and defense, (6) ineffectiveness of British Cavalry in a reconnaissance role.³⁴

The Army also learned several other lessons on individual equipment. The Lee Enfield Mark 1 Short was an outstanding infantry, as well as a cavalry, rifle. With only minor changes, this rifle would see active service for the next fifty years. Bandoliers for ammunition now replaced all previous methods for carrying ammo and were exceptional for allowing infantrymen to carry up to 220 rounds of ammunition comfortably. The uniform was well regarded and maintained with minor changes through the 1930s.³⁵ All sides derided the helmet used in South Africa as possessing “every fault that a soldier’s head can possess.”³⁶ In general, many also observed that the army must lighten the overall load of the infantryman and cavalryman to provide for better mobility.

Many seriously questioned the organization of staffs and quality of the staff officers, or lack of both during and after the war. Buller complained bitterly that his staff officers were of poor quality. The British staff organization was not standard and many viewed serving on a staff as disloyal to the regiment. Even Lord Roberts and Kitchener operated ad hoc staffs that often operated without a chief of staff. Kitchener operated

more as a deputy commander than a chief of staff for Roberts. Trained staff officers existed but not in enough numbers to meet the need of the hugely expanded Army during the war. Colonel Grierson, a staff officer in Pretoria in 1900, wrote, “I think our first lesson is that we must have big annual manoeuvres and have our staffs properly trained.”³⁷

Colonel Grierson touched upon the last issue closely tied to staffs and their training, especially at the division and corps level. Britain, before the Boer War, did not have standing division and corps staffs and had not conducted large-scale maneuvers to exercise or train them. This shortcoming was evidently apparent during the war. Testifying before the Eglin Commission, Lord Roberts identified three faults connected to training staffs, “It seems clear that the entire staff should be thoroughly trained; that a definite system of staff duties should be laid down; and that we should have enough trained staff to supply . . . a large army.”³⁸

Contemporary Lessons Learned

Several foreign military officers also influenced the British understanding of lessons learned of the Boer War. British officers translated and published the foreign officers in the *Journal of the Royal United Service Institute*, a professional periodical on military and naval matters published by the Royal United Service Institute (RUSI). The RUSI was founded by the Duke of Wellington in 1831 to provide a professional forum for naval and army officers to exchange ideas. By the turn of the century, most European countries had similar professional societies modeled after the RUSI. The *Journal of the Royal United Service Institute* has been continuously published from 1831 up to the present day. The translations came from speeches these officers gave to their counterparts

to the Royal United Service Institute. Each of these officers allowed the British to translate their comments and published them in the journal. Several had served as observers with the Boers during the war and thus had unique points of view on the British performance during the war.

In December 1901, Captain J. H. Jonkheer Ram, a Dutch Army officer who had served as a military attaché with General Botha and the Boer Army during the Boer War, addressed the Dutch Society for the Advance of Military Science on what lessons to draw from the Boer War. A British officer translated and printed his speech in the *Journal of the Royal United Service Institute* over several months in 1903 and 1904. This was one of the few opinion pieces by a foreign observer on the lessons of the Boer War.

Captain Ram saw several key lessons from the British side that directly contradicted or failed to support what the British saw as the lessons. Many referred to his observations during the debate in the coming years. He observed that during the British attacks early in the war, specifically at the Battles of Magersfontein and Colenso, “the moral of the attacker was broken when only a small loss had been sustained.”³⁹ He also felt the English repeatedly failed to properly recon the ground and often attacked with a poor understanding of the ground and the enemy position.⁴⁰ This, he felt, more than inferior morale, was the cause of these breakdowns of the attack. He pointed out that while Boers frequently stopped an attacking British force, they never routed the attacking force. He reminded his audience that these attacking forces often had to cross a killing zone that was devoid of any cover whatsoever. The poor intelligence on the enemy prior to the fight, concealed positions and smokeless powder had a very profound morale impact. He believed this was the major lesson concerning attacking on the modern

battlefield. He also pointed out that good intelligence of the enemy position would solve these problems and return the advantage back to the attacker.⁴¹

Some additional lessons he commented on include the limited impact of lances, swords and bayonets on the modern battlefield. The British seldom used these implements during the war. As for long ranged fire, independent fire by trained marksman was the key to successful long-range engagement. Isolation of the soldier on the modern battlefield also significantly influenced the soldier's morale.⁴²

In the end, Captain Ram saw four great traditional lessons about the attack confirmed by the Boer War:

1. The attacker maintained the advantage of maneuver.
2. A well-prepared attack based on fire superiority must succeed.
3. The belief that frontal attacks are impracticable was a fallacy.
4. Attacks must be continued under the cover of darkness to attain what they were unable to attain during the daytime.⁴³

On 5 March 1902, Lieutenant Colonel von Lindenau of the German General Staff spoke to the Military Society of Berlin concerning "What has the Boer War to Teach Us as Regards Infantry Attack?" While not directly involved as an observer during the war, Lieutenant Colonel von Lindenau interviewed several of the observers who served with the British and the Boers giving him a unique perspective of both sides of the conflict.⁴⁴

Lieutenant Colonel von Lindenau, as the title of his address indicates, focused specifically on infantry in the attack. He looked specifically at three battles, Magersfontein, Colenso and Spion Kop. One of his central themes was "In face of the conjoint rapid fire from the small-bore magazine rifle, and the quick-firing field gun, no

army should have attempted the attack over the open smokeless battle-field.”⁴⁵ He also directly addressed the deficiencies of the British Field Regulations of 1896, specifically as it addresses infantry in the attack. Prior to the Boer War, the Germans already criticized the British doctrine of utilizing three lines during the attack. The observations during the war backed up this criticism. Additionally, he pointed out the heavy reliance of the British on volley fire over individual marksmanship and the failure to consider the effective range of modern rifles. Lieutenant Colonel von Lindenau noted that the British improved considerably with the arrival of Lord Roberts. In his view, Lord Roberts addressed many of these shortcomings in training and drill.⁴⁶

In March 1904, Major Balck of the German General Staff presented the Military Society of Berlin a paper entitled “The Lessons of the Boer War and the Battle-Working of the Three Arms.” In his comments, Major Balck noted that, “A disconnected artillery preparation and an independently carried out infantry combat are both to be condemned.”⁴⁷ Additionally, he felt that artillery must fire during an infantry advance up to and almost into the advancing line of infantry. The artillery should only lift fire when the infantry are upon the trench line of the enemy.⁴⁸ In one case he observed, “By skilful combination of high-angle and low trajectory fire, the defenders were forced to keep down under cover, while the infantry advanced to a successful direct frontal attack over open plain.”⁴⁹

Major Balck spoke at length about cavalry and mounted infantry. He discounted the success of the British mounted infantry in the Boer War as useless in a European war. They worked in the open terrain of South Africa but only trained cavalry could perform the traditional cavalry roles on the European battlefield. Mounted infantry failed to

perform any cavalry mission such as reconnaissance and scouting during the war. In addition, the mounted infantry were at a disadvantage when they fought on foot because the horses encumbered them. He saw them as unable to perform the cavalry mission, and severely hindered in the infantry role. The compromise doomed the mounted infantry in his eyes. The cavalry remained the decisive arm for Major Balck. He strongly disagreed with the British plan to equip cavalry with infantry rifles and not lances and actually believed that the “chances of successful cavalry attacks has actually risen.”⁵⁰

In conclusion, Major Balck found that war proved that “superiority of the active-offensive over the passive-defensive.”⁵¹ He believed that the British infantry was drawing the correct lessons from the war while the artillery and cavalry were not drawing the correct lessons if they were drawing any at all.⁵² He drew his biggest lesson for the German Army from the Boer side. He believed that no militia-raised army (like the German conscript army) could succeed without peacetime training, military organizations and proper staffs. Superior morale alone would not succeed on the modern battlefield. In his view, this was why the Boers failed.

Conclusion

Unlike early military reforms of the British Army, the identification of lessons learned and strategic deficiencies by these three commissions was not the end of the process. These lessons generated significant changes in the tactical and organizational structure of the British Army. They also influenced new doctrine and new training. These strategic lessons laid the groundwork for reform. Through the three commissions, the British Government, as well as the army, clearly defined the strategic guidance to the military. The Norfolk Commission actually clarified what had previously been a confused

purpose for the army. It developed a strategic framework within which the army operated. The Royal Navy provided for security of the home islands. The British Army focused on providing an expeditionary force to fight abroad. The shift significantly affected the new structure developed after 1904.

While these commissions, especially the Eglin Commission, provided some guidance on lessons from the Boer War, they deferred to the military for most of the tactical problems. Lord Roberts, along with many of his subordinates from the war, directed the official army reforms. They used much of the guidance provided by these commissions. This framework formed the new strategic environment in which the army operated and planned. This allowed Roberts and his successors on the Imperial General Staff to direct the development of new training and new doctrine.

¹The Royal Commission, *Report on the War in South Africa* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1903), 83.

²Captain H. T. Russel, *The Employment of Artillery* (London: Hugh Rees, 1902), i.

³The Royal Commission, *Report on the War*, 33.

⁴Brigadier General J. E. Edmonds, *Official History of the War, Military Operations, France and Belgium 1914* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1928), 2.

⁵David G. Chandler, *The Oxford History of the British Army* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 189.

⁶*Ibid.*, 184.

⁷John Pimlott, *The Guinness History of the British Army* (Enfield: Guinness Publishing, 1993), 79.

⁸Bryan Perrett, *Last Stand! Famous Battles Against the Odds* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1991), 85.

⁹Colonel C. E. Caldwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1906), 206.

- ¹⁰Chandler, *Oxford History*, 207.
- ¹¹Perrett, *Last Stand*, 78.
- ¹²The Royal Commission, *Report on the War*, 1.
- ¹³Colonel John K. Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army 1899-1914* (London: Methuen, 1938), 166.
- ¹⁴The Royal Commission, *Report on the War*, 38.
- ¹⁵*Ibid.*, 38.
- ¹⁶*Ibid.*, 42.
- ¹⁷*Ibid.*, 45.
- ¹⁸*Ibid.*, 47.
- ¹⁹*Ibid.*, 47.
- ²⁰*Ibid.*, 49.
- ²¹*Ibid.*, 49.
- ²²*Ibid.*, 49.
- ²³*Ibid.*, 50.
- ²⁴*Ibid.*, 52.
- ²⁵*Ibid.*, 60.
- ²⁶*Ibid.*, 173.
- ²⁷*Ibid.*, 173.
- ²⁸Dunlop, *Development of the British Army*, 127.
- ²⁹*Ibid.*, 163.
- ³⁰*Ibid.*, 168.
- ³¹Jay Stone and Erwin A. Schmidl, *The Boer War and Military Reform* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1988), 107.
- ³²Sir Charles W. Dilke, "The Report of the War Commission," *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*, Vol. 48, (January-June 1904): 225.

³³Major General H. M. Bengough, *Notes and Reflections on the Boer War* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1900), 23.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 16.

³⁵Stone and Schmidl, *Boer War and Military Reform*, 112.

³⁶Bengough, *Notes and Reflections*, 60.

³⁷Brian Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College 1854-1914* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972), 187.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 192.

³⁹Captain J. H. Jonkheuer Ram, "Observations on the War in South Africa," *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*, Vol. 47 (July 1903-December 1903): 1399.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 51.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 53.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 1272.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 1281.

⁴⁴Lieutenant Colonel von Lindenau, "What has the Boer War to teach us, as regards infantry attack?" *Journal of the Royal United Service Institute*, Vol. 47 (January-June 1903): 48.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 53.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 55.

⁴⁷Major Balck, "The Lessons of the Boer War and the Battle Working of the Three Arms." *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*, Vol. 48 (July-December 1904): 1396.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 1397.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 1397.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 1405.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 1406.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 1406.

CHAPTER 3

OFFICIAL REFORMS, 1902-1914

[*Combined Training, 1902*] was an immense advance on the 1896 *Drill Book*. On its doctrine the Army was trained, and according to them must its failures and successes in the World War be judged.¹

Major General J. F. C. Fuller, *The Army in My Time* 1902

But I think that if we are to be guided by what we call the lessons of the War, great caution must be used.²

Mr. Campbell-Bannermann, from Parliamentary debate 14 March 1901

The Eglin, Norfolk and Esher Commissions did not mark the end of the military reforms but instead laid the foundation for a period of significant reform for the British Army. Under several different political administrations over the next ten years, the Army endeavored to restructure reform and prepare itself for a continental war. With ongoing negotiations with the French starting in 1905 that would lead to the *Entente Cordiale*, the realization that Britain would participate in a coming war in Europe quickly came to the forefront. The *Entente Cordiale* meant that the British Army would now fight with the French Army on the continent against the Germans. By 1910, General Langlois of the French Army had published a book called *The British Army in a European War*. The book outlined why and how the BEF would fight in France.³ The agreement between France and Britain was public knowledge by this point and what it would mean when war came to Europe was clear. Britain no longer enjoyed Queen Victoria's Splendid Isolation.

The Secretaries of State for War from 1900 through the first decade of the new century all recognized the need for reform of the British Army. The parliamentary

commissions, the military journals and the public press all agreed that the army needed reform. Just what form that reform was to take was the disputed question. The majority of reforms attempted by the first two Secretaries of State for War during this period, William St. John Brodrick and Sir Hugh Oakley Arnold-Forster, were relatively ineffective at achieving any long-term change in the army. Many historians used the term "Period of Attempted Reforms" to describe the terms of these first two secretaries.⁴ Both Brodrick and Arnold-Forster proposed schemes of reform that failed due to the economics of the ongoing war in South Africa and the demands of increased naval funding with the development of the dreadnoughts beginning in 1905. Their reforms were simply too expensive for a country still engaged in a war. Few changes that they instituted remained after their terms in office.

Three figures were responsible for the majority of reforms that shaped the army and produced the BEF of the First World War: Lord Roberts as Commander-in-Chief of the British Army 1900-1904, Lord Kitchener as Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army 1902-1909 and Lord Haldane as Secretary of State for War 1905-1912. J. F. C. Fuller called these three key reformers from this period the "three great protagonists of reform."⁵

Lord Robert oversaw significant revision to British tactics and doctrine. He also oversaw training reforms as Commander-in-Chief of the British Army until the War Office abolished the post in 1904. With the publishing of *Field Regulations: Combined Training* in 1902, Roberts initiated a complete rewriting of British doctrine focused on an expeditionary force fighting in a European war. He also directed significant changes in

the training of the Regular Army and the Reserves that helped prepare the British Army for war.⁶

Lord Kitchener implemented significant change and reform as the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army. While these changes primarily affected the Indian Army, Kitchener's reforms did exert influence on the British Army as a whole as individual and unit replacements constantly flowed back and forth between the British Army in England and the Indian Army. Additionally, Indian Army troops were some of the first British Commonwealth forces to arrive France in late 1914 to reinforce and supplement the BEF.⁷

The final reformer in Fuller's triangle, Lord Haldane, as Secretary of State for War from 1905-1912, exacted a more lasting impression on the Army than any other Secretary of State for War of this period. During his seven-year tenure, Haldane built much of the British Expeditionary Force that would later fight in France. He expanded training areas and oversaw a modernization program while consistently maintaining a budget conscious attitude that allowed his reforms to succeed where his predecessors had failed.

The reforms continued to a lesser degree after John Edward Seely replaced Haldane in 1912. By the time Lord Kitchener assumed the mantle of Secretary of State for War on 5 August 1914, the BEF he deployed was a very different force than the one that Britain deployed to South Africa in 1899. The reforms of this period deeply influenced the Army and directly contributed to the BEF's success on the battlefields of France in 1914.

Brodrick's Reforms

William St. John Brodrick became Secretary of State for War in 1900. The Boer War was still raging and this significantly crippled all attempts by Brodrick to reform the army. Brodrick initially envisioned a reformed army of six corps prepared to meet the needs of the empire both for home defense and for expeditions throughout the empire.⁸ He copied the German system of regionally linked Army Districts. His concept envisioned a nation at arms concept with each of the army corps aligned with a regional Army District. The regular army would man one corps completely while the next three corps were to be a mix of regulars and reservists. Reservists completely manned the remaining two corps. It was the first step towards preparing the Army for a continental war in Europe.⁹

Unfortunately, his six corps army would require almost 240,000 soldiers in England alone not including the overseas colonial commitments of the Army. At the start of the Boer War in 1899, the entire British Army, both home and abroad, contained less than 213,000 men and the force actually stationed in England was less than half of that number. The Parliament deemed the cost of this proposal with its increase demand in manpower and with the war in South Africa ongoing unacceptable. Brodrick's reorganization never occurred.

While Parliament failed to adopt his planned reorganization, his plan did have one positive side effect. During his tenure, he initiated a massive barracks construction program that allowed the centralization and reorganization of units into Divisions and Corps upon returning from the Boer War. The infrastructure he began to create for his

failed six corps scheme actually allowed later changes to the organization under successive Secretaries of State for War to be successful.¹⁰

Brodrick's tenure saw one major change in the civilian administration of the Army and Navy. The government formed the Committee of Imperial Defense (CID) to oversee the strategy and policy of administering the Empire. The CID included the Prime Minister, the Lord President, the First Lord, the War Minister, the Commander-in-Chief, the First Sea Lord and the heads of military intelligence from the Navy and Army composed the committee. This body represented the joining of the top civilian leaders of government with the civilian and military leaders of the War Office and the Admiralty in the formation of British grand strategy. While the CID was primarily a recommendation of the Esher Commission, Brodrick directly influenced the establishment of the CID and it was his most significant legacy for reforming the government of Britain.¹¹ The CID oversaw the formation and implementation of British national strategy for over half a century and through two world wars.

The only major army-specific reform to survive Brodrick's term in office was the change to the term of enlistment from seven years to three years with an additional nine years of service in the reserves. The government implemented the so-called Short Service Army to help replenish the reserves of the Army that the Boer War had badly depleted. This change was the only significant Army reform during the Brodrick years. Short Service lasted until 1907 when Haldane returned the term of enlistment to seven years active service with an additional five years in the reserves. By this time, the Short Service Army had successfully met its intent, having replenished numbers in the reserves. Few of Brodrick's other ideas survived long past his departure as Secretary of State for War.¹²

Arnold-Forster's Reforms

Sir H. O. Arnold-Forster became the Secretary of State for War in 1903. This coincided with the publication of the Report of the Eglin Commission. He replaced William Brodrick largely because of the demand for action upon receipt of the report in Parliament. Arnold-Forster had previously been the Parliamentary Secretary to the Admiralty and had served on various commissions concerning the British military. Well prepared for his role as Secretary of State for War, Arnold-Forster was generally more successful at pushing his reforms through Parliament than Brodrick. Unfortunately, his methods and personality were abrasive and this prevented him from being even more successful at reform. The majority of his reforms came directly from recommendations of the Eglin Commission. He oversaw the formation of the Army Council, a mixed civilian and military staff that oversaw the administrative control of the Army, and creation of the General Staff, a military staff that oversaw operational control and training of the Army. Sir Arnold-Foster also oversaw abolishment of the office of Commander-in-Chief of the Army, replacing it with a watered down job of the Inspector General of the Force, a member of the Army Council.

While more successful at reforming the institutions of the army than Brodrick, similarly Parliament judged many of his organizational reforms too costly and did not implement them. His "New Army Scheme" to restructure the army was too drastic and costly. His reform was also so radical it alienated too many different interest groups in Parliament and across the country. Parliament received his plans for the restructuring of the militia and yeomanry much the same as his earlier plans. He only served for two years when Sir R. B. Haldane replaced him in 1905. Upon his departure from office, Sir

Arnold-Forster authored a book entitled: *The Army in 1906: a Policy and a Vindication*, which outlined a defense of his ideas on army reform. In it, he disparaged the Parliament for only implementing the institutional portions of his reforms. His firm conviction was that failure to implement his structural changes placed the country at risk.¹³ Unfortunately, he did not understand the competing pressures in Parliament demanding the exercise of economy in any plan for army reform.

Robert's Reforms

Lord Roberts returned from South Africa in January 1901 to the post of Commander-in-Chief of the British Army. Serving under Brodrick, he would serve in this post until the War Office abolished the position in 1904. He entered this post determined to implement changes due to the deficiencies he had seen on the battlefield in South Africa. Later in 1904 with the abolishment of the position of Commander-in-Chief, he served his last year on active service on the Army Council and the Committee for Imperial Defense before retiring from the Army in 1905. For the remainder of his life, he publicly pushed for universal conscription and civilian marksmanship programs for Britain.

Lord Roberts's most significant reform for the British Army was overseeing the rewriting of British doctrine and tactics. In 1902, he appointed Colonel G. F. R. Henderson to write *Combined Training*. *Combined Training* became the cornerstone of the tactics and training of the reformed army.¹⁴ Colonel Henderson had served as Robert's Director of Intelligence during the Boer War. From his writings, it is evident that Colonel Henderson firmly supported the findings of the post war committees. The new doctrine, authored by Henderson and approved by Roberts, stressed the attack be

made with dispersed skirmishers who advanced forward. Henderson maintained that maneuver and fire support from machine guns, artillery and rifle fire were critical to the successful assault. On both the defense and the offense, entrenchments were now necessary to counteract the superiority of fire from the hidden enemy.¹⁵

Another significant reform Lord Roberts personally influenced was the replacement of Sir Herbert Miles as Commandant of the Staff College with Sir Henry Rawlinson in 1903. Rawlinson was a first rate field commander, serving as a corps and army commander during the First World War, as well as an outstanding staff officer, having served under Kitchener and Roberts in colonial campaigns as well as service in the Boer War. Rawlinson broke the stagnation the Staff College had fallen into during the tenure of his predecessor and brought significant changes to the Staff College, detailed below under officer education.¹⁶ These events, initiated by Lord Roberts, served as the nucleus for most interwar tactical reforms by the British Army. The last portion of this chapter details the changes that sprang from Lord Roberts's initiative.

Kitchener's Reforms of the Indian Army

Upon the conclusion of the Boer War in 1902, Lord Kitchener assumed the position of Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army. The Indian Army was a unique organization for the time. British colonies either had home rule, like Canada and Australia, or were straight out colonies. If Britain allowed home rule, then the colony garrison was largely indigenous forces, usually former British colonists. If Britain retained the colony, then the forces were primarily British Army regulars. India was different. The Indian Army was comprised of both indigenous forces, officered by British Army officers, and British Army regular units. This dichotomy made the Indian Army

unique. A second factor making it unique was the size of the Indian Army. It was second only to the home islands for number of British troops. Even as late as 1913, the Government of India required over 85,000 officers and soldiers of the British Army leaving only 160,000 on duty in other colonies or garrisoning Great Britain. Over one-third of the British Army was on duty in India at any given time during this interwar period.¹⁷

One of the first duties Lord Kitchener undertook upon arrival in India in November 1902, was to umpire the Delhi maneuvers “which impressed him as being curiously unlike war.”¹⁸ Kitchener saw the lessons of the Boer War clearly and strived to change the Indian Army to reflect the lessons he learned. He saw the threat clearly, “I feel confident that we could not have hoped to have been successful against an enemy of anything like equal strength, trained and organized as are the armies of the great Military Powers.”¹⁹ He needed to redraw the Indian Army along war fighting lines, not along the administrative lines for supporting the civilian government in India. He also saw the need for drastic change in the focus of the army away from the day-to-day routine of garrison and towards training in preparation for war.

In March 1904, he directed every unit to minimize the number of soldiers required for guard duty to increase the number of soldiers available for training for war.²⁰ On 11 April 1904, he issued the memorandum entitled *The Organization and Training of the Army in India*.²¹ This memorandum was the blueprint of the army he would create. On 28 October 1904, he ordered the redistribution of the Indian Army along military organizational lines, that is into Division, Brigade and Battalion lines, and not under provincial borders as they had been. In 1905 he directed changes to musketry instructions

emphasizing that rifle training must be tough realistic and involve moving targets at varied ranges in a detailed memorandum. He wanted to see soldiers building entrenchments when they went to the range. He also dispels two fallacies about the Maxim machine gun. The fallacies were that the machine gun was not effective and the second was that firing it required no special skill. In his opinion, the gun “is a very powerful weapon but its power entirely depends upon the way it is handled, and on the man who is handling it.”²² In 1905, Lord Kitchener established a Staff College for the Indian Army in India along the same lines as the British Army Staff College to ensure the new organizations he created had trained and organized staff officers.²³

Upon leaving the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, it is notable that Lord Kitchener chose to visit several Russo-Japanese War battlefields as a guest of the Japanese. He also reviewed several Dominion troop formations around the world before moving to his next assignment in Egypt. Many of his tactical reforms during his tenure paralleled the changes in Britain as shall be seen in the Tactical Reforms section below.

Haldane’s Reforms

Field Marshal Haig, after the completion of the victory march of the BEF through London in July 1919, arrived unannounced at Sir Haldane’s house and left a copy of his bound dispatches in which he included the inscription:

To Viscount Haldane of Cloan - the greatest Secretary of State for War England has ever known. In grateful remembrance of his successful efforts in organizing the Military Forces for a War on the Continent, notwithstanding much opposition from the Army Council and the half-hearted support of his Parliamentary Friends.²⁴

In the end, Sir Haldane, unlike his predecessor, enjoyed wide popularity within parliament for his reform plans. It came after a long fight with both his peers in Parliament and within the army itself concerning his reforms. He enjoyed this support because he not only recognized but also worked within the three principal constraints on reform in Britain. First, any change would need to continue to support the policing of Britain's colonial empire. Second, a nation in arms concept towards the reserves on the continental model was not possible in Britain due to inherent mistrust of a large army that remained from the Cromwell Era. Finally, any change would need to allow for little or no increase in the yearly Army Estimates. By remaining within these constraints, Haldane was not only able to succeed in his reforms but also to reduce the Army Estimates each year he was secretary.²⁵

His most critical reform came after he had held office for two years. In what became known as the Reorganization of 1908, Lord Haldane completely changed the British Army and its reserves system. Prior to the reforms, the British Army was broken into four main parts: the British Regular Army, the Militia, Yeomanry, and Volunteers. The Militia was a loosely formed national guard with little or no experience responsible for home defense. The Yeomanry was the cavalry force of the Militia. Although it tended to be somewhat higher caliber than the rest of the Militia, it still lacked the experience of the Volunteers. The Volunteers were primarily a special reserve of former soldiers serving out the reserve portion of the enlistment. In case of war, they would fill out the ranks in regular army units.²⁶

Haldane devised a force composed of three elements. The Regular Army composed of regiments with two battalions each, one on colonial duty and one at home

station. This retained the Caldwell System of linked battalions. Additionally, the regular army battalions at home station would form the core of the expeditionary force, organized into brigades, divisions and corps. Haldane ensured the brigade, division and corps staffs were standing organizations and not ad hoc, as was the case before the Boer War. The second element of Haldane's system was the Special Reserve, composed of experienced former active duty soldiers. As designed, this organization filled any shortages in the home battalions in case of mobilization for war and came from the existing Volunteers. The final element was the Territorial Army, built from the Yeomanry and the Militia. Haldane's reform differed from his predecessors because he linked each battalion in the Territorial Army to an active duty regiment who would be responsible for its training and operation. Uniformity in quality of the reserves was the intent of this change. Haldane had created a force that met the needs of the agreements the British had made with the French as far back as 1905. He had foreseen in 1905 that:

We had therefore to provide an Expeditionary Force which we reckoned at six great [i.e. with three instead of two brigades] divisions, fully equipped, and at least one cavalry division. We had also to make certain that this force could be mobilized and sent to the place where it might be required as rapidly as any German force could be.²⁷

These changes proved instrumental in the tactical reforms to come. Now the regular army and all its reserves trained according to a single unified doctrine. The General Staff centrally trained and operated the reserves, while local governments maintained administrative control of the reserves. This avoided the problem of local control Arnold-Foster had run into when he tried to centralize all control. Unlike previous plans, Haldane's reform did not alienate the various interest groups of Army Reform. Now with a unified doctrine, a reorganized structure and a clear strategy the army was

able to further develop and implement the tactical reforms that provided for an expeditionary army of the highest caliber.

In 1912, Sir Haldane left the post of Secretary of State for War. He served in that position longer than any other previous Secretary of State for War did. His closest peer in length of term was in fact Lord Cardwell, the famous reformer who developed the Cardwell System of linked battalions.²⁸ Much as he exceeded Cardwell's time in office, he also exceeded the impact of Cardwell reforms with his own.

Tactical Reforms

Tactics

In his introduction to *Field Regulations: Combined Training, 1902*, Lord Roberts stated, "In this manual are enumerated certain principles which have been evolved by experience as generally applicable to the leading of troops in war."²⁹ *Combined Training* was the first in a series of regulations published, first under the guidance of Lord Roberts and later under the General Staff, which would guide British doctrine throughout the time between the wars. The key change in *Combined Training* was its emphasis on combining the three arms: cavalry, infantry and artillery. Prior to the Boer War, this concept was not doctrine. In the post Boer War era, combined arms tactics were the key to solving the tactical problem. In Part I of *Combined Training*, it stated that "Each arm of the service possesses a power peculiar to itself; yet is dependant, to a greater or lesser degree upon the aid and co-operation of the other arms."³⁰ This was the first codification of this idea in British field regulations. Combine arms warfare, long practiced ad hoc by the British in the field, was now written into regulation. This would be the touchstone of all the future

manuals published during this period. *Combined Training* formed the basis for all the artillery, infantry and cavalry regulations of this period.

One key improvement in the new doctrine was the understanding of the power of new technology and how best to combine it rather than use it separately. The two tables below, taken from British doctrine, demonstrate this. The first (table 1.) was British doctrine on engagement ranges from before the Boer War. These were the tactics used during the initial encounters of the war. The second table (table 2) came from *Combined Training*. These reflected the changes in tactics from the conflict in South Africa. The change was dramatic. Prior to the Boer War, the different arms, infantry, artillery and cavalry, acted separately against the enemy. As table 1 shows, artillery began the engagement between 3,000 and 1,500 yards. As the artillery learned at Colenso during the Boer War, the later range proved deadly to an entire battery of British artillery that the Boers wiped out early in the battle. The artillery rode out to within 2,500 yards of the suspected Boer entrenchments, which were actually 500 yards closer, and quickly came under intense rifle and pom-pom fire forcing the surviving crews to abandon the guns with heavy loss of life. As a side note, Lord Roberts's son died in an attempt later that day to recover these very guns from the battlefield. It is no surprise Lord Roberts championed these reforms. Following engagement by artillery, the infantry acted next with collective volley fire at 1,500 to 800 yards moving to individual fire in the close battle at less than 500 yards. Cavalry was not even involved in the initial firefight but was to finish the fight with a charge and then pursuit. As table 1 shows, artillery and rifle fire did not overlap and the regulation still stressed collective rifle, or volley fire.

Table 1. Ranges (from *Handbook to Field Training, 1894*)

Terms Applied to Ranges.	Limits.	Description of Fire.
Distant	About 3,000 to 1,500 yards	Artillery
Long	1,500 to 800 yards	Long Range Rifle
Medium	800 to 500 yards	Collective Rifle
Decisive	500 yards to Position	Collective and Individual Fire

Source: Major J. W. Malet, *Handbook to Field Training* (London: Gale and Polden, 1894), 34.

In the postwar doctrine, the changes were dramatic. As shown in table 2, there were now three separate fires, rifle, field artillery, and heavy batteries (howitzers). The difference, at the time, between artillery and howitzers was that artillery was generally a flat trajectory short-range field piece while howitzer was a long-range field piece with arcing fire. These fires engaged simultaneously and their ranges overlapped. Individual rifle fire dominated with no mention of collective or volley fire. Finally, as the engagement distances greatly expanded to account for the changes in technology, there arose an expectation for an increased number of skilled riflemen in the ranks.

Combined Training saw attaining superiority in the firefight as the decisive point in the offense. The troops carried the assault through by volume and accuracy of fire. The commander's proper application of fire ruled the attack and defense. This placed a greater responsibility on the commander to devise the plan. It also required greater initiative on the part of junior leaders and individual soldiers for controlling and directing the fire to the decisive point.

Table 2. Ranges (from *Combined Training*).

Terms Applied to Ranges.	Rifle.	Field Art.	Heavy Batteries.
	Yards	Yards	Yards
Distant	3,000 to 2,000	6,000 to 4,500	10,000 to 6,000
Long	2,000 to 1,400	4,500 to 3,500	6,000 to 4,000
Effective	1,400 to 600	3,500 to 2,000	4,000 to 3,500
Decisive	600 and under	2,000 and under	2,500 and under

Source: Great Britain War Office, *Field Regulations: Combined Training 1902* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1902), 3.

Attacks came from widely dispersed skirmishers using fire and maneuver to close with the enemy. The artillery and cavalry fire supported the advance and all fire concentrated on the decisive point. The infantry assaulted the decisive point while the cavalry followed up with a pursuit of the fleeing enemy. The infantry then entrenched and prepared to repulse any enemy counterattack.³¹

Two foreign officers observed the British training these tactics. Their comments reflected the fact that the British Army not only published these new tactics as doctrine, but also trained and practiced them as well. German Major General Von Lobell, after observing British Army maneuvers in 1904, reported:

In their maneuvers the British Infantry showed great skill in the use of ground. Their thin khaki-clad skirmishers were scarcely visible. No detachment was ever seen in close order within three thousand yards. Frontal attacks were entirely avoided. No attack on entrenched positions was adjudged successful unless with a numerical superiority of six to one.³²

The French General Langlois, observing a Territorial Army unit advancing against a Regular Army unit in force on force maneuvers in 1910, noted the Territorial unit advanced “by rushes” advancing “methodically” to the flank of the defender.³³ The British Army adopted these tactics throughout the military and executed them in force on force maneuvers each year starting as early as 1904 with the regular forces and by 1910 had pushed this doctrine into the Territorial Army as well.

The dispersion called for with these offensive tactics required greater initiative on junior leaders and soldiers. In recognition of this need, *Infantry Training, 1905* directed that during training “Officers, non-commissioned officers, and squad leaders, should frequently be ordered to fall out, and men allowed to carry on the practice without interference” to allow subordinates to execute their orders without senior leadership to help develop this initiative.³⁴ The same regulation also directed that “the men must learn to act independently” in offensive actions because of the tactical dispersion required on the modern battlefield.³⁵

In the defense, the force entrenched and utilized the terrain to best cover and conceal their position. The doctrine recognized the enhanced lethality of riflemen. Five thousand men could now hold a front of up to one mile with a reserve. Three thousand riflemen could hold that same distance of frontage without a reserve.³⁶ Prior to this, the standard frontage of a division of 12,000 riflemen was 700 yards.³⁷ *Combined Training* recommended dummy entrenchments as a form of deception. Friendly artillery was responsible for counter battery fire and defending the flanks. Cavalry either provided flank security or executed counterattacks.³⁸ While attack was preferred, because the

attacker maintained the initiative, the regulation gave equal treatment to both the attack and defense.

The regulation resolved the debate between cavalry and mounted infantry and their responsibilities. Much of this was simply putting into regulation what had been practice in the field in South Africa. *Combined Training* gave distinct missions to cavalry and mounted infantry forces. Cavalry was an independent force of brigade or division size whose mission was to:

- i. To reconnoiter the country and report on the routes of advance.
- ii. To oppose and defeat the enemy's horsemen, and so prevent the enemy gaining information regarding the movements of the main army.
- iii. To ascertain and report the strength, numbers, and dispositions of the hostile forces, interrupt their movements, and undertake enterprises against their communications.³⁹

Mounted infantry was an infantry force mounted on horseback acting as an advance guard for a body of infantry whose mission was to:

- i. Provide for the immediate protection of the main body.
- ii. To seize, and hold, tactical positions, often far in advance of the slower moving infantry, and to deny their occupation to the enemy till the infantry arrive.⁴⁰

Artillery's job was to dominate the firefight and attain superiority of fire by first engaging the hostile artillery and then supporting the infantry assault. In the defense, artillery prevented and suppressed oblique and enfilading fire from the friendly entrenchments.⁴¹

Combined Training was the first in a series of new manuals published in this period. The focus of British doctrine changed from the previous regulations like *Infantry Drill, 1896*. The focus turned away from rigid drill and towards collective training.⁴² The

same year the War Officer published *Combined Training*, it published *Field Artillery Training*. The next manual was the second most important doctrinal manual of the interwar period, *Field Regulations: Infantry Training, 1905*. Key additions in *Infantry Training* included the development of a systematic schedule of training standardized throughout the army and the development of machine gun doctrine, which assigned the new weapon to the infantry. Similar to the French, Britain had formerly seen the machine gun as field artillery. In 1907, the War Office published *Field Regulations: Cavalry Training, 1907*. The changes in Cavalry Training reflected many of the lessons the British drew from the Russo-Japanese War.⁴³ Each of these added to the foundation formed by *Combined Training*. This was the single greatest improvement in British tactics after the Boer War. A coherent doctrine now ruled all services, including supply and services branches, based on a cornerstone manual, *Combined Training 1902*.

The culmination of doctrinal development in the interwar period was the publishing of the two manuals directing the functions of and responsibilities of the staff at all levels. General Haig, who was the Director of Military Training and later the Director of Staff Duties, heavily influenced the writing of *Field Service Regulations Part I – Operations* and *Part II – Organization and Administration*, published in 1909.⁴⁴ With its publication in 1909, British military doctrine now included administrative and operational staff duties and responsibilities answering a major problem of the Boer War. These two manuals combined many of the lesser earlier manuals in a two volume doctrinal base for the British Army. The staff, which before 1904, had been purely an ad hoc organization created at the whim of the local commander and filled with his cronies was now a standing organization with doctrinal responsibilities trained on a war footing.

One critical aspect of the regulation was that shortly after its publication, Dominion militaries; namely, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa agreed to adopt British Army doctrine and manuals as their own. First proposed in 1907 and finally adopted at the Imperial Conference of Premiers in 1909, the General Staff now became the Imperial General Staff. The Dominions adopted formations compatible with British Army units and followed British regulations and doctrine. Surprisingly, General Louis Botha, the former Boer General and opponent of the British, adopted the new policy for South Africa at the Imperial Conference. Now the entire British Commonwealth would fight under a unified doctrine.⁴⁵

Officer Education

Prior to the Boer War, the anti-intellectual bias dominated even the senior ranks of the British Army. Lord Wolseley, the Commander-in-Chief of the army at the start of the Boer War, declared in 1897 “I hope the officers of Her Majesty’s Army may never degenerate into bookworms. There is happily at present no movement in that direction, for I am glad to say this generation is as fond of danger, adventure, and all manly out-of-door sports as its forefathers were.”⁴⁶ The experience of the Boer War changed this Victorian attitude drastically. An example of this change was seen in Swinton’s *The Defence of Duffer’s Drift*.

Upon publication in 1903, then Captain, later Major General, E. B. Swinton’s *The Defence of Duffer’s Drift* became perhaps the single most influential document on military education to come from the British Army during this period. The book covers a Boer War tactical problem which, as the latest edition published in 1986 puts it, demonstrates “how one adapts a piece of terrain to the accomplishment of a difficult

mission with limited manpower, weaponry, and communication.” Meant to answer the lessons from the Boer War, its appeal has become universal. Used for officer education in Germany during World War I and throughout the years taught at West Point and the US Army Command and General Staff College, still in print the book remains relevant today.⁴⁷ This book was representative of the larger body of work during this time. This was a significant change in British officer’s view of their profession. The anti-intellectualism of the Victorian Era was fading. As J. F. C. Fuller wrote of this era, “conversations of professional nature crept into ante-room and mess.”⁴⁸

The reforms had a significant impact on initial officer training as well. By the middle of the decade, many officers and NCOs instructing at the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst were Boer War veterans. Additionally in 1908 as part of the army reorganization's demand for more officers, the War Office expanded the school grounds of Sandhurst to include room for 424 more cadets, nearly doubling its size.⁴⁹ By 1908, the course of instruction included learning to fire machine guns, entrenching and signal flag communication.⁵⁰ This year also saw the conversion of the old Volunteer Corps at British Public Universities to the Officer Training Corps. Britain organized the Officer Training Corps nationally and unlike the few old Volunteer Corps they replaced, the General Staff directly controlled them. The OTC provided a larger number of officers for both the Regular Army and the Territorial Army. This change recognized a need for increased number of trained and experienced officers by Lord Haldane’s reforms.⁵¹

The year 1904 saw the rebirth of the British Army Staff College at Camberley. It had seen a drop off in attendance since the beginning of the Boer War. The atmosphere had changed significantly with the new class in 1904. J. F. C. Fuller, who attended during

that time, wrote that, “While some aspects of the college retained some traditions from before the war, much was radically different.” Most significantly, the competitiveness for attendance had drastically risen. The number of candidates for the class in 1904 competing for only 24 seats was over 100 officers. Most were highly decorated officers who had served in the war.⁵² The officers knew that service on the new General Staff and Army Council required Staff College attendance. Attendance at the Staff College received new levels of prestige. The quality of education also improved. Tactical problems began taking on a more realistic view. With the discussions held with the French in 1905 forging changes in the structure of the army, they also forced changes in strategic planning. Between 1905 and 1907, students at the staff college worked on the tactical problem of British mobilization in response to German violation of Belgian neutrality in an attack on France.⁵³ The new training at Camberley brought the concept of the war game to the staff college including full orders and movement tables. The curriculum now revolved around the duties of staff officers supporting an army in the field. The changes to the Imperial General Staff lent a sense of purpose to the Staff College that it had never had before.⁵⁴

Training

“We must follow a system of training for war,” stated Lord Kitchener upon assuming the role of Commander-in-Chief in India.⁵⁵ His attitude was prevalent among most of the leaders returning from the Boer War and the training reforms reflected this newfound focus on training for war, specifically war on the continent. Prior to the Boer War training above the battalion level was rare. After the Boer War, regulation standardized training across the army. Over the fall and winter, squads and companies

drilled followed by battalion maneuvers in the spring. By the summer, annual maneuvers at Aldershot were a regular event.⁵⁶ Conducted at the divisional level and several times at the corps level, several even included Dominion troops, mostly Canadians. This Dominion presence demonstrated the linkages in doctrine and organization imposed by the Imperial General Staff across the British Empire.⁵⁷ One major exercise in 1912 pitted two entire corps against each other. While this practice was common among the continental armies, prior to the Boer War, large-scale maneuvers by the British Army were rare and those maneuvers that did occur seldom exceeded brigade size.

Of all the individual soldier skills taught at the squad and company level, the single greatest and most influential change was in basic marksmanship. British marksmanship became legendary in 1914. Surprisingly without significant increase in annual ammunition expenditure, the British Army was able to implement this change. The change was not the amount of firing the soldiers had been doing but rather the method of instruction. Before the war, officer controlled fire with collective volley firing. Accuracy was not desired or sought. After the war, the focus was heavily on individual accuracy and firing under battlefield conditions. The change resulted in superior marksmen that significantly enhanced the firepower of British infantry and cavalry.

During the period 1908-1910, General Smith-Dorrien commanded the British training area at Aldershot. He includes in his autobiography a passage discussing “Pow-wows.” These debates occurred after maneuvers at Aldershot and were after action reviews conducted by the senior referee, usually the chief of the general staff or the commander of Aldershot, of the force on force exercises conducted there.⁵⁸ The training was no longer a gentlemen’s affair but was observed and refereed by senior officers.

Salisbury Plains had been a British Army base for some time before the turn of the century but with expansion during this period, it became second only to Aldershot in size and number of troops. This expansion in training areas aided in many of the force-on-force activities including inter-divisional exercises culminating in 1910 and after in Army Maneuvers involving force-on-force exercises of several divisions on each side fighting from Aldershot to Salisbury plains.⁵⁹

Equipment

In 1903, based on recommendations made by the committee Lord Roberts formed to study replacing Britain's antiquated artillery, the army placed orders for Mark I 18-pounder and the 13-pounder field artillery pieces to respond to the shortfalls evident from the Boer War. The Mark I became the primary artillery piece for most of the British Army by the start of the war with the exception of the cavalry divisions, which fielded the 13-pounder.

The British Army fielded a new rifle to meet the needs of both the cavalry and the infantry. Prior to the Boer War, the British considered the lance the primary cavalry weapon while they considered the sword and carbine secondary weapons. During the war, the cavalry had dropped the lance to lighten the load on their horses during the long-range patrols on the veldt. Also during the war, most cavalry formations adopted the infantry rifle over the carbine due to the carbine's shortcomings. After the war, the British Army shortened the length of the standard infantry rifle, the Lee Enfield. The new rifle became officially the Short Magazine Lee Enfield Mark I or SMLE. Britain procured the SMLE in 1903 as the primary rifle for both the infantry and cavalry.⁶⁰ Shortly before the war, the British cavalry again carried the lance but this was largely due to the fact the

German cavalry still carried lances. While the cavalry retained the sword and eventually reissued the lance, the cavalry's primary weapon was the rifle and it would remain so throughout the First World War.

Unlike the rifle, economy was the primary limiting factor in machine gun development between the wars.⁶¹ Even within economic limits, development and reform of the machine gun occurred. The British Army reassigned the machine gun out of the field artillery and into the infantry. The Maxim was the primary machine gun of the infantry while the lighter Vickers was the primary cavalry machine gun. *Infantry Training 1905*, included doctrine on the use of machine-guns in the attack and defense now that the gun fell under infantry control.

One major innovation that, when compared with her European contemporaries, Britain far exceeded the others was in lorries or motorized transport. The British Army supply plan involved rail line support from the port on the continent. At the railhead in the division area, divisional lorries picked up the supplies and moved them to the refilling point, where battalion trains were filled.⁶² This system was far more efficient system than any other system on the continent.

On the eve of the war, Britain had available in England as a continental expeditionary force, one cavalry division, and six infantry divisions along with the corps troops including corps artillery. The infantry divisions were comprised of medical, engineer, supply, signal, veterinary units as well as brigades or squadrons of the three arms: cavalry, infantry and artillery. The chart below (table 3) shows a comparison of British personnel and equipment as it compared with European contemporaries on the eve of war in 1914. The British equipment fielding had kept pace with her European

contemporaries. It is worth noting that one significant difference between British/French artillery and German artillery was that the British and French relied more on quick firing flat trajectory weapons while the Germans favored heavy howitzer type artillery.

Table 3. Comparison of Personnel and Equipment Strength in August 1914

Unit	Officers	Soldiers	Total Personnel	Horses	Artillery	Machine Guns
British Inf Div	585	17,488	18,073	5,592	76	24
British Cav Div	439	8,830	9,269	9,815	24	24
German Inf Div			17,500	4,000	72	24
German Cav Div			5,200	5,000	12	6
French Inf Div			15,000		36	24
French Cav Div			4,500		8	0

Source: Compiled from data in Major General J. F. C. Fuller, *The Army in My Time* (London: Rich and Cowan, 1935), 133; and Brigadier General J. E. Edmonds, *Official History of the War, Military Operations, France and Belgium 1914* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1928), 430-443.

Conclusion

While the civilian administrations of the army at the War Office oversaw the strategic reforms of the post-Boer War era, the military leadership initially through the Commander-in-Chief and later through the General Staff oversaw the tactical reforms. These two efforts radically reformed the army that had suffered so many defeats at the hands of the Boers. The larger strategic reforms of the structure and organization of the

army set the stage for the development of tactics, training, doctrine and organization from the division to company level. The tactics developed were significantly different from prewar tactics. Unlike older British doctrine designed for the policing of an empire, the new tactics addressed fighting a like equipped European army on a modern battlefield. The British Army organized and trained peacetime corps and division staffs for the first time. These divisions and corps conducted annual force-on-force exercises with the training reviewed by senior General Staff officers during after action reviews, Smith-Dorrien's "Pow-wows." The army standardized training at all levels and in all forces, both active and reserves. Officers, no longer bound by an anti-intellectual establishment, sought to address their professional shortcomings.

Several questions remain. Were these changes accepted? Did the British follow their tactics and doctrine? Did these changes reflect in the BEF's performance in 1914? The next three chapters seek to answer these questions. The debate between the wars and the performance on the fields of France directly demonstrate the effectiveness of these reforms and changes to the British Army.

¹Major General J. F. C. Fuller, *The Army in My Time* (London: Rich and Cowan, 1935), 128.

²Colonel John K. Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army 1899-1914* (London: Methuen, 1938), 135.

³General H. Langlois, *The British Army in a European War* (London: Hugh Rees, 1910).

⁴Dunlop, *Development of the British Army*, 218.

⁵Fuller, *Army in My Time*, 111.

⁶Great Britain War Office, *Field Regulations: Combined Training 1902* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1902).

- ⁷Fuller, *Army in My Time*, 112.
- ⁸David G. Chandler, *The Oxford History of the British Army* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 202.
- ⁹Correlli Barnett, *Britain and Her Army, 1509-1970* (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1970), 356.
- ¹⁰Dunlop, *Development of the British Army*, 218.
- ¹¹Barnett, *Britain and Her Army*, 357.
- ¹²Fuller, *Army in My Time*, 106.
- ¹³H. O. Arnold-Forster, *The Army in 1906* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1906), 26.
- ¹⁴Brigadier General J. E. Edmonds, *Official History of the War, Military Operations, France and Belgium 1914* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1928), 9.
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CHAPTER 4

THE INTERWAR DEBATE 1902-1914

Thus far, and ever since the close of the Boer War, we had been thinking of military reform from a national and imperial angle. That war had cost us an immense sum, and, as usual, our reforms were urged on by economy, and not by military values. Now we became Europe-conscious, and as we did so these values crept in and compelled our Government to consider what part we were to play in an European war, and how we could most economically prepare to play it.¹

Major General J. F. C. Fuller, *The Army in My Time*, 1935

Many historians have viewed the military debates of this time period, especially the debates in Great Britain, as breaking into specific schools of thought that polarized the debate and forced both sides into rigid theories of the battlefield. This concept of the debate holds that most of the officers in the British Army fell on one side or the other of the debate and once part of a school of thought; few deviated, changed or agreed with any ideas from the other side.

There is another perspective from which to view this debate. One can view the debate as a free-flowing, passionate exchange of ideas. It can be viewed as a professional debate at the beginning of what MacGregor Knox and William Murray in *The Dynamics of Military Revolution* called “the Fourth Military Revolution,” that of the First World War, which they believe “set the pattern for twentieth century warfare.”² In Knox and Murray’s view of military revolutions, tremendous turmoil in social, political and military aspects of society accompany these revolutions.³ This tumultuous time produced an open debate that sought answers to the new problems produced by the

revolution. Several factors support the idea of an open debate during the beginning of this military revolution.

First, the debate was surprisingly vocal especially when one considers the anti-intellectual attitude of the Victorian British Army. The Boer War changed the close-minded attitude of the officer corps and with this change came a new era of debate and discussion about tactics and the profession of arms. Second, officers often agreed with some aspects of a particular theory but violently disagreed with other aspects of that theory. To believe that this debate was simply a two-sided argument, and not a multifaceted one, seems to be a great oversimplification. Third, as demonstrated in a variety of exercises before the war, no one theory dominated the army. The army practiced and developed various methods and tactics during this period, some based on the Boer War, some on the Russo-Japanese War, and others based on what their continental peers practiced. Finally, as seen on the battlefields of 1914, the tactics executed by the BEF did not replicate any one single theory or doctrine. Instead, these debates reflected both doctrinal and non-doctrinal solutions to the problems of the modern battlefield.

In his history *Britain and Her Army 1509-1970*, Correlli Barnett states of this period, “not since the days of Commonwealth had the British Army been so generally gripped with a sense of professional purpose in peacetime.”⁴ These debates were often fought by various members of the army, the government and the British public at large. The debaters often argued on different sides during different arguments making it difficult to identify any one school of thought. In his comprehensive history entitled *A History of the British Cavalry 1816 to 1919*, Lord Anglesey stated, “During the period

between the two wars there was a vast amount of soul-searching. Many were the hard-fought engagements between diehard conservatives and forward-looking reformers, between those reformers themselves and between traditionalists and iconoclasts.”⁵

At the height of this debate, the Imperial General Staff began publishing the *Army Review*. Starting in 1911 and continuing up until the start of the First World War, the *Army Review* was an official publication of the British Army. While it was significantly more conservative and less prone to open debate than the *Journal of the Royal United Service Institute*, the *Army Review* contributed to both sides of these debates and demonstrated the progressive nature of the General Staff during this period. As General Nicholson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, introduced the new journal: “It is only when one attempts to teach a subject or sits down to write about it that one realizes how much one still has to learn.”⁶ The purpose of this new journal was to encourage “the study of the military art.”⁶ This dramatically demonstrated the change to the Edwardian attitude from the traditional Victorian attitude towards the study of the military profession.

The Tactical Debate

Grudgingly, Major General J. F. C. Fuller, in his semi-autobiographical work *The Army in My Time*, grants that the British Army by 1914 had largely overcome many of its traditional handicaps from the Victorian Era. Even with this grudging admission from Fuller, he quickly pointed to the reversion to prewar thought, like the reintroduction of the lance as a cavalry weapon, which crept back into the army by 1909.⁷

This chapter will examine the debate in the British Army during this period of reform, 1902-1914. The debate focused heavily on the alternatives between the lessons from the Boer War and the Russo-Japanese War versus what the large continental armies,

namely France and Germany, were doing. This debate dramatically demonstrated the active professional pursuit of British officers of the time. The discussion and debate occurred in a number of professional and official journals of the time as well as a number of books published by officers and civilians alike. The image of the Victorian general officer frowning on his subordinates for studying the military professional was outdated. The Boer War energized the British officer corps like no previous conflict and fostered an atmosphere where the study of war as a profession dominated. The Edwardian generals not only fostered and supported the study and debate by their subordinates but also directly participated in the study and debate.

One key component of this new debate was the change in the make up of the officer corps, specifically the changes in the make up of the general officers ranks, of the British Army after the Boer War. Cardwell, as Secretary of State for War in the 1870s and 80s, abolished the policy of purchased commissions by the aristocracy. By the end of the century, this change brought a significant shift in the make up of the officer corps of the British Army. As table 4 shows, middle class officers not only rose to represent the majority of officers in the military but also clearly came to dominate the general officer ranks. In 1875, 78 percent of the general officers were members of the aristocracy or landed gentry. By 1912, only 52 percent of the general officers were members of either the landed gentry or the aristocracy. Furthermore, less than 30 percent of that number were in the aristocracy. Most of the general officers of the BEF were not in their position based on their lineage. They were there on merit. This significantly influenced the debate of this period. Anti-intellectualism died at the same time the middle class rose to dominate both the officer ranks as well as the general officer ranks of the British Army.

Table 4. Officers in the British Home Army at Various Dates, by Percentage

Year	Category	Aristocracy	Landed Gentry	Middle Class
1875	Officers	18%	32%	50%
	Generals	70%	8%	22%
1912	Officers	9 %	32%	59%
	Generals	30%	22%	48%

Source: Data extracted from tables in M. A. Ramsay, *Command and Cohesion: The Citizen Soldier and Minor Tactics in the British Army, 1870-1918* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002), 131.

Conscription

While the war was still raging in South Africa, the debate concerning national conscription using a continental model started in Britain. While the debate was old, dating back to the era of Crowell, the post Boer War debate differed significantly from early debates due to *Entende Cordiale* and the Norfolk Commission providing new strategic guidance for the army. For the British to turn to conscription would significantly impact the tactics of the time. The tactics of *Combined Training*, required long service regulars to master. One early proponent of the debate, George Shee, lectured the RUSI on “The Advantages of Compulsory Service for Home Defense,” in 1902. His lecture supported the concept of universal conscription to support an expansion of the army and more importantly to build up a large reserve system to support the regular army in time of war. According to Shee, the Boer War proved the need for a large reserve system far greater than was presently available in the Militia, Volunteers, and Yeomanry.⁸ Several

later articles argued for other systems of militia that included one in 1907 entitled “The Swiss Militia System.” The lecturer, Major Johnson, argued for the adoption in Britain of a similar system to the Swiss model of a Nation in Arms. The main point of the Swiss system of the time was national conscription for service in a militia force not the regular army. Notably, the Secretary of State for War, Lord Haldane, chaired this lecture.⁹

Later in 1907, a lecture, chaired by Lord Roberts, presented a historical study entitled “National and Non-National Armies.” The lecturer argued all armies were either National, defined as voluntary, or Non-National, defined as conscript or compulsory. National showed a historical trend of being superior to Non-National armies. As applied to the debate on conscription, the author believed the British Army could not become a Non-National Army and that the only course for the British Army was to divine a way to provide a National Army to meet the threat of continental war.¹⁰

A change in the makeup of the British Army as represented in this debate would have significantly influenced British Army tactics of the time. The tactics of fire and maneuver that the British had adopted after the Boer War required long service regular army soldiers to master these tactics. If the British Army adopted conscription or national service, the army would have had to adopt different tactics to accommodate the large yearly influx of untrained men. A conscript army could not have mastered the British system without significant changes to the training and tactics models the British worked with during these years.

In the end, economy more than any other factor decided this debate. The British Government could not afford a conscript army during the naval arms race with Germany. The Royal Navy was the first line of defense for the British Empire and continued to

receive priority in funding. Lord Haldane's system of reorganization and adoption of Swiss Militia style organization in the Reserves was the result of the conscription debate. It also supported the tactics decided on after the Boer War, which relied heavily on well-trained long service regulars to execute.

Cavalry

The British public was very engaged in the debate on tactics. One notable example was Erskine Childers. Many regarded him as an expert on the Boer War, since he had edited the Boer War history entitled *The 'Times' History of the War*. Childers chose to focus primarily on cavalry tactics as demonstrated by his book published in 1910 entitled, *War and the "Arme Blanche."* Lord Roberts wrote the introduction in the book and provided his endorsement to Childers's ideas. *Arme blanche* referred specifically to the sword and generally to the use of the sword in a cavalry charge. It was also often used as a term of reference for cavalry forces in general. Childers published another volume on cavalry tactics called *German Influence on British Cavalry* in 1911. His central thesis was that the British cavalry doctrine had ignored the lessons of the Boer War and the Russo-Japanese War in favor of German style cavalry doctrine.¹¹ Childers primarily contended that the *arme blanche* and the charge were obsolete tactics and the rifle and dismounted action were the primary purpose of cavalry in future warfare. He further argued that the army should remove the lance and sword from the cavalry inventory to ensure the primacy of the rifle. The British General Staff disagreed and actually published a review to Childers's book in the *British Cavalry Journal*. Surprisingly, the General Staff agreed with many of Childers' arguments in support of the primacy of the rifle and dismounted action by the cavalry. The disagreement centered on the sword

itself. The General Staff argued that the *arme blanche* still proved useful in modern war and that the cavalry charge was not obsolete. The General Staff conceded that when training time was limited commanders should emphasize the rifle but the sword and lance should remain in the equipment of the cavalry.¹² This position was a compromise between the two sides of this debate.

One can argue that the British General Staff fought to save the sword and resurrect the lance but that was only half the story. The General Staff also directed and enforced marksmanship, fire discipline and dismounted action as the primary skills of the cavalry. As Major General Rimington, a Boer War veteran, put it in 1912, “Our British regular cavalry are at least ten, if not fifteen years ahead of any continental cavalry in rifle shooting, fire discipline and the knowledge of when and how to resort to fire tactics.”¹³ Even Childers, harsh critic of the cavalry, admitted this in 1911, “our cavalry, excessive as its reliance on the steel is, stands, of course, in the matter of fire action, ahead of its continental rivals.”¹⁴ In the end, the field regulations *Cavalry Training 1904* and *1907*, pushed progressively in emphasizing the rifle as the primary cavalry weapon over the lance and sword. By the 1907 edition, the training for the sword and lance were no longer in the main body of the regulation. The regulation banished them to the appendix.¹⁵ This occurred despite the fact that General French, the ranking British field commander on active service at the time, was heavily against any reduction in the priority given the lance and sword. Even his influence could not alter the progressive doctrine of the army. This despite the fact that the senior officer responsible for the continuation of Lord Roberts’s progressive changes, General Haig was a cavalry officer himself. In the

end, the cavalry retained the sword and reintroduced the lance but emphasized training on and fighting with the rifle.

Artillery and Indirect Fire

The use of field artillery in anything but a direct fire mode was unheard of in Europe before the turn of the century. While many nations, including the British, saw fixed coastal defense guns, siege artillery and howitzers capable of indirect fire, the technical hurdles in the way of accurately coordinating fire out of sight of the guns during a mobile war seemed insurmountable. Even in the Boer War and the Russo-Japanese War, both sides only used indirect fire during sieges or against fixed positions at known ranges. The technology simply was not available to provide indirect fire in a mobile battlefield like what most tacticians envisioned future conflict in Europe would be. The debate did not focus on the purpose of the artillery or its use. The British had several guns capable of indirect fire, but like most of the European armies, the British did not have any technology to relay information accurately and reliably on the move. The emphasis during the initial debate of this period was on the coordination between field artillery and infantry in the assault. Key to this debate was whether to subordinate the field artillery to the infantry in order to provide closer co-operation in the assault. Brigadier General Beaton of the General Staff, in his article responding to Brigadier General Du Cane article published the previous year, supported this very idea. The British retained the direct fire mode as the primary mode of supporting infantry in the assault up until the beginning of the First World War. Coordination and liaison work between the infantry and artillery dominated the interwar maneuvers. In addition, unlike many European armies, the British placed large gun shields on all field artillery in order to protect the

crew in the direct fire mode following their lessons learned at Colenso and elsewhere during the Boer War.¹⁶

Infantry Assaults

How to solve the problem of the infantry attack in the age of modern rifles, smokeless powder, rapid-fire artillery and the machine gun was possibly the key point of debate between the wars. In 1911, the *Army Review* provided a guide to the new regulation *Infantry Training*. Many saw the regulation as a regression towards pre-Boer War doctrine. The Imperial General Staff viewed the new regulation as a return to the center. They saw the pre-Boer War doctrine as too conservative. The doctrine adopted in the latter part of the Boer War and represented initially by *Combined Training 1902* was too progressive. The new regulation represented the middle ground in the debate. Fire and maneuver were the keys to closing with the enemy but the shock action of the final assault was the decisive point.¹⁷ The next article in that same issue of the *Army Review* emphasized this concept. In “Fire and Movement,” General Munro emphasized the use of fire and movement in the offense as espoused in the new regulation.¹⁸ Shock action was not emphasized. The focus of the General Staff was still on combined arms maneuver and fire, the very spirit of the progressive *Combine Training*. This edition of the *Army Review* also contained several additional articles related to the publication of *Infantry Training*. An artillery article from that edition discussed artillery support of the infantry attack, again emphasizing fire and movement as the key technique for closing with the enemy.¹⁹ Morale and the final assault were not even discussed in this edition of *Army Review*. While the regulation considered the final assault as the decisive point, the final assault was not emphasized in the training or tactics. The emphasis was on fire, maneuver

and the cooperation between arms because these allowed the attacker to reach the decisive point.

In 1907, the British Army demonstrated this concept of fire and maneuver during maneuvers. Captain D. W. Falls, an American Army captain, observed these maneuvers and was amazed at the tactical dispersion he observed during the assault. “It was a curious feeling to know that the whole countryside was full of armed men, that thousands were engaged in fighting a battle, and yet not to see twenty soldiers as far as the eye could see.” He further stated that, “There were no swarming lines of infantry, no solid columns hurrying forward on the roads, no inspiring bayonet charges with trumpets sounding and colors flying: in fact, in these days of long-range armaments, it seemed about as near the ‘real thing’ as one could get.”²⁰ The fire and maneuver tactics were not only written into regulation, they were standard practice for the British Army.

Eight Companies vs. Four Companies

Britain was the only major power to maintain the eight-company battalion structure into the twentieth century. All the other European major powers utilized the four-company battalion model. Nothing the British Army had experienced in the Boer War supported the concept of the four-company system. Nevertheless, the British heavily debated this issue for a number of reasons including the universal acceptance on the continent of the four-company system. In a 1906 article published in the *Journal of the Royal United Service Institute*, Captain Yate identified the primary points supporting the four-company model. These included higher experience in the commanding major, easier span of control for the battalion commander and more officers in each company.²¹ Later in 1911, the *Army Review* published an article that did not support either option; it simply

identified the arguments of both sides. Key arguments in support of the eight-company system were the higher percentage of officers per man and the command opportunity for captains.²² In the year immediately prior to World War I, the British Army changed its battalions over to the four-company model copying the European armies they would soon be fighting. The primary reason for the change was to increase the number of officers at the company level and to increase the experience of the company commanders who would now be majors. This change exemplified the continental influence that sometimes trumped the Boer War experience.

The Boer War

Even before the Boer War ended, articles began to appear in the professional journals in England discussing the failure of British tactics during the Boer War. While many of the articles and lectures revolved around what lessons the war provided for the British Army, a more important debate loomed. This debate revolved around the larger issue of whether or not the lessons of this war should be learned at all. The main question in this debate was, "Did warfare as seen in South Africa largely against poorly equipped and disorganized farmers apply to warfare in Europe against an organized and trained modern army?" Many believed that none of the lessons of the Boer War could be applied to continental warfare.²³ In his lecture, "Continental *versus* South African Tactics: A Comparison and Reply to Some Critics," to the RUSI in 1902, Lieutenant Colonel Maude debated this very issue. He argued for retention of the old British tactics based on the continental model and against adoption of new tactics based on the experience of the Boer War. He went to great length to prove, mathematically, that the increased range of the rifle actually favored the attacker because the margin of error possible with the

increased ranges meant there was a smaller chance that a round would fall in any given area covered by that range. Additionally, he argued for the attacker to assume close order and that control of the fire by the attackers should be done with volley fire. The chairman of the lecture allowed questions to be asked as was the custom of the time. Major General Webber specifically questioned Maude's use of the mathematical method for deducing proper tactics.²⁴ It is interesting to note that the chairman of this lecture was Major General Bengough who had published his own work on the lessons of the Boer War, which closely paralleled Maude's thesis.

The aforementioned Erskine Childers weighed in during this debate concerning cavalry lessons of the Boer War. He greatly disagreed that the Boer War was an anomaly and its lessons could not be applied to modern war on the continent. Both his books heavily emphasized that the Boer War results were products of the technological change and not based on the particulars of the enemy or the terrain.

Historian Colonel Dunlop pointed out that with the publishing of *Field Service Regulations, Part I Operations 1909*, "a general agreement upon Strategic and Tactical principles had grown up as a result of the South African War."²⁵ In the end, the British Army accepted the principles laid down by Lord Roberts and Colonel Henderson in *Combined Training 1902*, and further refined and collected by General Haig into *Field Service Regulations 1909*, as the lessons of the Boer War. The progressive side in this debate was the more influential than the conservative side was and the BEF widely accepted and practiced the new tactical doctrine in the early battles of the First World War.

The Russo-Japanese War

The Russo-Japanese War sparked a great deal of debate throughout most of the militaries in Europe. The British viewed the war through the lens of their Boer War experience. France, Germany, and Great Britain all sent official observers to the Russian and Japanese armies. The primary British Army observer was Sir Ian Hamilton and he recorded his observations in *A Staff Officer's Scrap-book During the Russo-Japanese War*, published in 1906. He was not alone. The British sent 29 officers, including three generals, to Manchuria with the Japanese during the war, more than any other European nation. This number included a large number of Boer War veterans.²⁶ Unfortunately for the British military debate, the General Staff withheld most of the observer reports from the officer corps of the British Army. Hamilton's book was more a history than a technical or tactical study of the war.²⁷ Several articles were published in the *Journal of the Royal United Service Institute* including a translation of a Japanese article entitled "The Tactical Employment of Machine Guns with Infantry in Attack and Defense." This article detailed the successful offensive use of the machine gun to provide covering fire to the advancing infantry in the Russo-Japanese War. It also reinforced the concept of the machine gun primarily as a defensive weapon, the offensive success of the machine gun the author believed was limited to certain specific situations.²⁸ This article fit nicely into the British Army's concept of the modern battlefield and its emphasis on fire and maneuver to cover the killing zone. Machine guns along with the artillery in the direct fire mode were best employed to provide the covering fire to the maneuver during the attack.

In the end, each military drew selective lessons from the Russo-Japanese War. The lessons selected were those that supported the existing doctrine of the country. The French Army saw quick-firing artillery in the direct fire role supporting mass frontal infantry attacks, which relied on strong shock effect of the infantry as the answer. The Germans relied on heavy artillery supporting envelopment by the flanks by infantry. The British Army put its faith in the lessons of the Boer War; maneuver and fast, accurate rifle fire by the infantry supported by field artillery firing from protected positions.²⁹ Each choice had faults and no one single method proved completely dominant in the coming war.

The Cult of the Offense

In *The Killing Ground: The British Army, the Western Front and the Emergence of Modern Warfare, 1900-1918*, Tim Travers pointed to three primary causes for the development of what he called the Cult of the Offense that evolved in Europe between 1902 and 1914. These were “(1) the recognition of the influence of firepower; (2) a pessimistic and anti-modern attitude, which included suspicion of the reliability of the working-class recruits; and (3) an understanding of warfare as structured, ordered, and therefore potentially decisive.”³⁰ Initiated in the French Army, this was not solely a French concept, but one that developed to some extent in the British, German and Austrian Armies. France’s General Langolois, introduced in the last chapter, not only worked closely with the British Army on maneuvers before the war but also served as an influential proponents of the Cult of the Offense.³¹ The advocates of this concept discounted the fire and maneuver lessons of the Boer War and concentrated on the Japanese offensive successes during the Russo-Japanese War. The high casualties of

offensive operations in both these conflicts validated this theory in the eyes of its supporters. High losses by the attacker, as was the case in both these conflicts, justified the Cult of the Offense and its theories. High casualties were not only to be expected but sought. Proponents believed that attackers must continue the advance through the killing zone to achieve the decisive point of the engagement. The offensive spirit was the only way to overcome these high losses. A belief in the success of the offensive spirit was the only thing these adherents believed would carry the attackers through these heavy losses and into the enemy's defenses. As Major General Altham, commander of British Southern Command before the war put it, "The ideal of the final decisive charge must ever be in the mind of the attacking infantry, to sustain them in enduring the punishing losses of the fireswept zone, to draw them on to victory."³² The justification of the Cult of the Offensive was an end unto itself. According to Altham, attacking infantry could only continue the final assault after such horrific losses if it believed in the decisiveness of that final assault.

One must note that the British, unlike the French, were not completely tied to the Cult of the Offense. Even the most ardent supporter of the final assault as the decisive action of combat did not limit the training of infantry to this task alone. The British generally saw three tasks as the primary ones on which infantry needed to train: attack, defense and security. The army gave each tactical task equal play in the regulations and in the training plans.³³ While debate raged about the tactics of the offense, the British Army did not neglect the tactics of the defense in doctrine or training.

Conclusion

The British Army debate during this period between the Boer War and the Great War emphasized the massive change in the culture of the army. No longer anti-intellectual or aristocratic, the British Army openly questioned what modern warfare was, and how the army could answer those challenges. The British Army, contrary to popular belief, more often than not landed on the middle ground between the extreme conservative and progressive advocates. Even the extreme points of view in these debates represented this new intellectualism. In *Trial by Fire: Command and the British Expeditionary Force in 1914*, Nikolas Gardner stated, “The length and intensity of the tactical debate suggests, however, that the cases of both sides represented the product of genuine reflection by capable officers.”³⁴ Considering the economical and social issues of the time, it is amazing the British Army achieved as much as it did during this period. During the summer of 1914, these reforms directly influenced the survival of the BEF in Belgium and France.

¹Major General J. F. C. Fuller, *The Army in My Time* (London: Rich and Cowan, 1935), 111.

²MacGregor Knox and Williamson Murray, *The Dynamics of Military Revolution, 1300-2050* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 6.

³Ibid., 12.

⁴Correlli Barnett, *Britain and Her Army, 1509-1970* (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1970), 367.

⁵The Marquess of Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry 1816 to 1919* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1986), 377.

⁶General W. G. Nicholson, “Introduction,” *Army Review*, Vol. 1 (July-October 1911): 4.

- ⁷Fuller, *Army in My Time*, 121.
- ⁸George Shee, "The Advantages of Compulsory Service for Home Defense," *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*, Vol. 46 (January-June 1902): 318.
- ⁹Major R. A. Johnson, "The Swiss Militia System," *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*, Vol. 51 (January-June 1907): 539.
- ¹⁰J. Ellis Barker, "National and Non-National Armies," *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*, Vol. 51 (January-June 1907): 653.
- ¹¹Erskine Childers, *German Influence on British Cavalry* (London: Edward Arnold, 1911).
- ¹²Imperial General Staff, "War and the 'Arme Blanche,'" *Journal of the U.S. Cavalry Association*, Vol. 21 (July 1910-May 1911): 341-57.
- ¹³Anglesey, *British Cavalry*, 388.
- ¹⁴*Ibid.*, 423.
- ¹⁵*Ibid.*, 401.
- ¹⁶Brigadier General F. C. Beatson, "The Co-operation of Field Artillery with Infantry in the Attack," *Army Review*, Vol. 2 (January-April 1912): 133.
- ¹⁷Imperial General Staff, "Infantry Training 1911," *Army Review*, Vol. 1 (July-October 1911): 86.
- ¹⁸Major General C. C. Monro, "Fire and Movement," *Army Review*, Vol. 1 (July-October 1911): 91.
- ¹⁹Brigadier General J. P. Du Cane, "The Co-operation of Field Artillery with Infantry in the Attack," *Army Review*, Vol. 1 (July-October 1911): 97.
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- ²¹Captain C. A. I. Yate, "Our Present Infantry Organization: A Suggestion," *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*, Vol. 50 (July-December 1906): 1043.
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²⁶Sebastian Dobson, introduction to *The Russo-Japanese War: Reports from Officers Attached to the Japanese Forces in the Field (London, 1905-6)* (Bristol: Ganesha Publishing, 2000), v.

²⁷Sir Ian Hamilton, K.C.B., *A Staff Officer's Scrapbook During the Russo-Japanese War* (London: Edward Arnold, 1905).

²⁸Captain F. Takenouchi, "The Tactical Employment of Machine Guns with Infantry in Attack and Defense," *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*, Vol. 51, (January-June 1907): 450.

²⁹Barnett, *Britain and Her Army*, 368.

³⁰Travers, *Killing Ground*, 37.

³¹*Ibid.*, 38.

³²*Ibid.*, 45.

³³Brigadier General R. Haking, "Company Training," *Army Review*, Vol. 2 (January-April 1912): 79.

³⁴Nikolas Gardner, *Trial by Fire: Command and the British Expeditionary Force in 1914* (Westport: Praeger Productions, 2003), 21.

CHAPTER 5

THE BEF IN WORLD WAR I 1914

In fact, battlefield conditions of the Great War were not radically new to military professionals of the day. They had seen them before, recently in Manchuria and Thrace. The key role of medium and heavy artillery, the invisibility of entrenched defenders, the heavy losses to be expected crossing the fire zone between trenches: all these were part of the mental lexicon of trained officers in the years preceding the war. This is not to argue that World War I was not so bad, or that the officer corps was brilliant. It does suggest that World War I was not as much of a break in military history as is often assumed.¹

Robert Citino, *The Quest for Decisive Victory* 2002

The BEF in 1914

On 28 June 1914, the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand sent shockwaves throughout Europe. In Britain, the government debated whether to mobilize the army. As events progressed and diplomacy failed, the government made the decision that the army would mobilize if Germany violated Belgian neutrality.

The mindset in Britain and elsewhere that the war would be over by Christmas, contrary to modern perceptions, was not universal, especially in the military. Many, like General de Lisle commander of the British 2nd Cavalry Brigade, saw the possibility of a long struggle. In an address to his officers upon mobilization that August he stated “Make no mistake, gentlemen, we are in for a long and bitter war.”² This was not a new idea. One officer, Colonel Meinertzhagen wrote in 1913, “Work at the staff college also makes me realize what a ghastly business the next war is going to be.”³ Lord Kitchener immediately upon assumption of the office of Secretary of State for War in August 1914 knew he would need to plan for a war of at least three years and immediately made plans

for a million-man army for Britain.⁴ Many of the officers sent to France with the BEF also believed this. General Haig believed the war might last two or even three years.⁵

The mobilization of the BEF for the Great War went as planned and was more organized and better coordinated than the mobilization of the force for South Africa fifteen years earlier. The Imperial General Staff had not been content to rest on the laurels of the successful deployment to South Africa, had continuously rehearsed and planned the mobilization for years. The docks at Southampton demonstrated the level of organization and detail the Imperial General Staff went to in preparing the deployment. During the five-day deployment of the BEF from Southampton, the peak day for trains brought eighty into the docks while the peak in shipping had over 137 simultaneous passages crossing the channel for France. All without a single major hitch.⁶ In the first demonstration during the new war of the influence of the parliamentary committees set up after the Boer War, the lesson of successful mobilization had been reinforced and strengthened. The mobilization also seems to have answered the lesson from the Eglin Commission concerning the need for quality staff officers. The mobilization was the work of the Imperial General Staff and the various subordinate operational staffs, all of which were post Boer War creations. This quick and effortless mobilization of the BEF was only the first of several successes for these staffs.

The BEF, commanded by Field Marshal French, contained a separate cavalry division, commanded by Major-General Allenby, and two corps headquarters, I Corps commanded by Lieutenant-General Haig, and II Corps, ultimately commanded by Lieutenant-General Smith-Dorrien after the sudden death of Lieutenant-General Grierson. The BEF deployed with only four of its authorized six divisions. The War

Office kept the 4th and 6th Divisions in Great Britain due to concerns of defense of the British Isles and continuing unrest in Ireland. Most of the 6th Division remained in Ireland due to this unrest and the 4th moved to the coast of Britain to defend the shore from German landings. The government intended and eventually did send these divisions to the BEF in France. At the same time, the government began moving colonial forces towards Europe from around the empire, including two divisions from India and all the colonial troops from South Africa.⁷

The look and equipment of the BEF was significantly different from her continental peers. The BEF infantry, artillery and cavalry soldiers were dressed identically in khaki. In fact, when the British cavalry dismounted, they were indistinguishable from the infantry of the line. Germany units consistently mistook dismounted British cavalry for infantry. Their equipment was purely functional and well tested from years of colonial campaigning. British artillery had large gun shields in place to protect the crews. The numbers distributed to their divisions for artillery and machine guns closely matched their continental peers. The only major exception to this was a deficiency in heavy artillery when compared with the Germans but this was primarily caused by economic reasons within the British government and not on tactical choice. The equipment recommendations made in the interwar years by the various commissions proved their worth with the BEF in France.

The BEF moved forward on 21 August after consolidating at the French ports. Initially the BEF advanced into Belgium to the left of the French Fifth Army. The BEF arrived south of Mons, Belgium on the 21 August 1914 and moved into assembly areas.

On 22 August 1914, the BEF took up positions to the north and west of Mons, Belgium for the first major battle of the war for the British Army.

Mons

Assigned by the French to meet the German advance in Belgium, the British chose the ground where they would defend against the First German Army under von Bülow. The BEF with cavalry screening forward knew the Germans were coming yet the Germans were unaware of the exact location and composition of the BEF. The first battle of the war for the British would be a defensive one. The BEF took up position with its cavalry screening to the front in several small towns north and west of Mons. The II Corps defended a natural defensive line made by the Conde Canal and the I Corps defended a salient to the west.⁸ The British infantry was entrenched. They demonstrated to the advancing Germans the firepower they had mastered since the Boer War. The accuracy and volume of fire was devastating to the attacking Germans, as described by a soldier in the BEF:

Our rapid fire was appalling even to us, and the worst marksmen could not miss, as he had only to fire into the 'brown' of the masses of the unfortunate enemy, who on the fronts of our two companies were constantly reinforced at the short range of three hundred yards. Such tactics amazed us, and after the first shock of seeing men slowly and helplessly falling down as they were hit, gave us a great sense of power and pleasure.⁹

By the end of the day, the Germans, who outnumbered the British by at least two to one and in some areas three to one, with the assistance of artillery support, succeeded in breaching the British lines in several places. Even with these breaches, the BEF held the line until nightfall when the BEF discovered the French Fifth Army to the east was in retreat. This left the BEF with exposed flanks on both sides and forced the beginning of the long retreat south and west towards Paris.

The Battle of Mons clearly demonstrated the positive influence of the Boer War on British tactics. It was the extremely accurate rifle fire of the entrenched British soldiers that devastated the leading German units. The emphasis on well-trained marksman and the willingness to entrench on the defensive were both lessons learned in South Africa and instilled in the British Army during the reforms of the years between the two wars.

The Retreat from Mons

With the conclusion of the Battle of Mons, the long retreat south and west towards Paris began. Yet the retreat was more a withdrawal than a rout as aptly described by a British Captain, “The traces of a hasty departure, though not of a disorderly rout, were everywhere apparent: broken-down cars, burnt supplies, and so on, but no rifles and equipment lying about.”¹⁰ The discipline of the long service veterans of the BEF proved indispensable during the retreat. The Germans kept up heavy pressure especially on the British II Corps, which was on the very left flank of the entire Allied line at the time. Two units protected the BEF. A French cavalry corps to the west screened the entire allied army and the screening forces of the British cavalry division to the front kept the Germans from enveloping the BEF. The cavalry fought primarily dismounted though a few cavalry actions did take place between German and British cavalry. In these early cavalry clashes, the *arme blanche* proved effective for the cavalry when fighting other mounted forces.

The BEF success during the long retreat was no an accident. Though not embodied in doctrine, the British Officer Corps, primarily at the staff college, had long studied and planned retreats very similar to the retreat from Mons. General Robertson,

commandant of the staff college, advised his graduates to study the great retreats. In his farewell address, Robertson cautioned:

Our regulations justly lay stress on the value of the offensive; but if this teaching alone is given, think what may be the effect on the troops when they are ordered to retire instead of to go forward – that is, to abandon that method of making war by which alone, according to the training they have previously received, decisive victory can be achieved. Think, too, of the disintegration and demoralization which nearly always accompany retrograde movements, even when an army has not been previously defeated. It seems to me that there is particularly no chance of successfully carrying out this operation in war unless we thoroughly study and practice it beforehand during peace.¹¹

His caution was not lost on the officers who trained at the staff college in the interwar years. The 4th Division trained in 1913 on retreats during peacetime maneuvers. The training almost mirrored exactly what the division underwent in 1914 after the battle of Le Cateau. Historian Brian Bond compared the 1913 maneuvers with Le Cateau, “As in the real battle, the 4th Division out-marched its pursuer and turned in good order to meet them.”¹² The BEF owed its survival during the retreat almost as much to the staff who planned it as it did to the leaders and soldiers who executed it.

Le Cateau

The Battle of Le Cateau was perhaps the best example of the prewar British Army vision of battle. At Le Cateau, Smith-Dorrien stopped his II Corps’s retreat and briefly turned and faced the German onslaught. The British infantry dug field entrenchments, coordinated with the artillery and waited the oncoming Germans. The cavalry screened the Corps flanks while the infantry disciplined fire in close co-operation with the field artillery delivered devastating rifle, machine gun and artillery fire into the German formations.¹³ The successful delay action by II Corps was marred late in the day when

the order to retreat was given but not all units received it. This significantly raised the toll of British dead and wounded from what would have otherwise been a stunning victory.¹⁴

The Battle of Le Cateau displayed Lord Roberts's vision of *Combined Training* on the battlefield better than any of the other battles of 1914 did. The interwoven use of cavalry, infantry and artillery executed flawlessly by Smith-Dorrien's Corps at Le Cateau showed what ten years of training the army on these new tactics and combining the effects of the three arms as described in the regulation could produce.

The Marne

Shortly after the arrival of the 4th Division from England and the Battle of Le Cateau, the BEF stood up the III Corps. On 31 August 1914, the BEF contained five divisions of infantry and a division of cavalry, all organized into three corps. The 6th Division was on the way from Ireland. By 5 September 1914, the BEF and French Armies halted their retreat around a line running parallel and to the south of the Marne River. This line ran along the river from Paris to the French-German frontier. By the start of the Battle of the Marne, the BEF had lost 20,000 men and half of its artillery.¹⁵ Despite these losses, it was still a coherent fighting force and with the reinforcements arriving from England began the next phase of the campaign.

With the beginning of the Battle of the Marne, the tables were turned and it was the Germans turn to retreat and the British and French turns to advance. The French called upon the BEF to reinforce their advances on the Marne. The Germans retreated in good order and the battle was primarily one of advancing to contact on the British and French sides, and one of rearguard action on the German side.

The Aisne

At the Aisne River, it was the Germans turn to stop and defend. The BEF, part of Joffre's larger plan, attacked across the Aisne river using surviving bridges and improvising others. The terrain did not favor the attack. Even with the difficult terrain, the Germans holding the high terrain overlooking the river, the initial attack by the 11th Infantry Brigade found success on 12 September 1914. Unknown to the British and French forces attacking the Aisne line, the Germans had begun to entrench along this line with equipment they were receiving from Germany. By 14 September 1914, Field Marshall French had ordered the BEF back on the defensive and directed entrenchment of the British current positions.¹⁶

First Ypres

Historians have called the next phase of this early stage of the war "the Race to the Sea."¹⁷ Both sides on the Western Front saw the opening gap to the north from where the Aisne River positions were the Germans had begun to dig trenches. The BEF, with reinforcements from England and India, had grown to five corps. The battle, later known as the Battle of First Ypres, lasted from mid-October to late November when winter set in. The initial fight resembled a meeting engagement with British and German attacks converging. The Germans launched fourteen divisions, mostly recent recruited reserve formations, against the seven BEF divisions. The British individual marksmanship largely accounted for the huge difference in casualties during the battle. The Germans lost nearly twice as many soldiers as the BEF who lost over 24,000. The British and French armies had stopped the Germans and the forces of both sides now drew a solid line from the English Channel to the Alps.¹⁸ With the end of the Battle of First Ypres, the

BEF had sustained almost 50 percent casualties from the original force that deployed to France in August. The war had decimated the Old Contemptibles in the four months of fighting and the BEF would never be the same.

Tactical Successes

During the course of the first campaign, some tactics stand out. Staff work far exceeded the level of proficiency demonstrated during the Boer War. Efforts spent during the interwar years on the Staff College proved crucial to the success of the BEF. Marksmanship and entrenchment, both lessons taken directly from the Eglin Commission, gave the BEF the advantage it needed to defend against overwhelming odds. Overall, the British cavalry preformed its reconnaissance role exactly as doctrine laid out. They fought primarily dismounted with their rifles and, often as not, led their horses when on the march to maintain their mounts for when they were needed.¹⁹ Integration of the three arms into combined arms was key to the defense during most of the actions in August and September. These tactics were all directly descended from the reforms of the interwar years.

Staff Work

The British Staff College had produced an “unprecedented number of trained staff officers” between the Boer War and the First World War.²⁰ The battalions and brigades had standing staffs. Additionally, Haig’s Corps headquarters also had a standing staffs. The trained staff officers served these organizations well during the initial fighting of the war. Many of the Divisions and Smith-Dorrien’s Corps headquarters did not have standing staffs. Some of the shortfalls of these organizations can be blamed on the ad hoc nature of these staffs. Economy had prevented the British Army from fielding complete

staffs in all these formations. Overall, those organizations that had trained staff officers benefited significantly from the training brought about by the changes at the Staff College after the Boer War. Additionally, the large annual exercises involving division and corps size elements significantly influenced the staff officers' ability to support these organizations in war. Organizations that had not existed or been trained before the Boer War.

Entrenchment

The British moderates had won out in the interwar debate on offense versus defense. The British Army while emphasizing the offensive as the decisive action in war still recognized the concept of defense in its doctrine and trained entrenchment and defense at all levels. This training proved decisive in the operations during the long retreat from Mons. Fought as a series of rearguard actions, the British soldiers entrenched without being prompted, a sharp contrast with the actions of soldiers in South Africa a decade earlier. The British Army had consistently trained and reinforced defense and entrenchment during the interwar years. This training served the BEF well in 1914 from Mons to Ypres.

Marksmanship

British individual marksmanship was critical to this small force holding out versus overwhelming numbers of attackers in almost every engagement of 1914. As was noted early, the BEF often was outnumbered two to one and frequently higher ratios. As John Keegan noted in his history of the war, "Trained to fire fifteen aimed rounds a minute, the British riflemen, of the infantry and cavalry alike, easily overcame the counter-fire of the attacking Germans who, coming forward in closely ranked masses,

presented unmissable targets.”²¹ This marksmanship skill was directly tied to comments made by the Esher Commission ten years prior. The army had corrected that glaring deficiency of the Boer War to the point where the British soldier now excelled at that which had once been his greatest weakness.

Cavalry Missions

As noted earlier, one of the lessons of the Boer War was the poor performance of Cavalry in the reconnaissance, screening and guard missions. Prior to the Boer War, the British Army had placed too much emphasis on the *arme blanche* and not enough on the other missions of cavalry. By the outbreak of World War I, British Cavalry fully understood its mission and roles. In executing the screens, guards and covers of the retreat of the BEF in the fall of 1914, British cavalry excelled at delaying the German columns who often thought they were engaging infantry formations far larger than the small cavalry covering forces the BEF actually deployed. During this early phase of World War I, when movement was still an option, British cavalry proved its worth and showed it had learned the lessons of the Boer War.

Combined Operations

Throughout the engagements, the British operated with close infantry and artillery coordination. The few exceptions to this rule were notable for the inability of the lone element to survive without the combined support of the other arms. The classic example of failure to coordinate combined operations was the 3rd Division at Mons. The 3rd Division failed to position its artillery into supporting positions for its infantry battalions and the 3rd Infantry Division was the only British Division to falter and compromise the Mons position for the British.²² British artillery and infantry worked in close

coordination during the majority of operations during this initial phase of the war. This cooperation was what Lord Roberts had envisioned in *Combined Training*.

Conclusion

In his book *The Quest for Decisive Victory*, Robert Centino puts the problems of these first few months of the war in late 1914 into perspective, “The real problem was that these armies were so large, their maneuvers so lumbering, that rarely were they prepared to take advantage of a favorable opportunity.”²³ This density of massive formations allowed the occupation of the frontier from the Swiss Alps to the English Channel. It also quickly destroyed all hope for mobility on the Western Front until new technology and new tactics could be developed.

That the British Army reformed from the end of the Boer War to the last days in August 1914 was indisputable. The question then was whether the reforms were the right ones that prepared the BEF for continental war in 1914. Was the war in 1914 the one for which their doctrine and training prepared them? Until the end of the Race to the Sea and the Battle of First Ypres, the fight was almost exactly what the military leaders thought it would be. It was terribly violent, producing high casualties in the large armies. It was a war of movement; the BEF itself covered a distance of over 200 kilometers in less than two weeks. The war of 1914 was exactly what the planners of British doctrine had expected when they wrote *Combined Training 1902*. Between 1899 and 1914, Britain had created a force that could match her continental rivals on the modern battlefield and prevail. Historian Tim Travers put this success in simpler terms, “The achievement of the British Army in 1914 was that it had fought larger German forces to a standstill, and that it had survived.”²⁴

The war changed with the completion of the Race to the Sea in November 1914. None of the great powers' militaries was prepared for the conflict that they faced in the early winter of 1915. Too much had changed and the forces engaged were so large that the prewar tactics could not succeed. Again, Travers points out that, "Hence, although the original BEF's mix of arms was reasonably well suited to the mobile conditions of 1914, it was not so well adapted to the trench warfare of 1915-1917, or the set piece tactics of 1918."²⁵ Few if any of the military planners could envision the tactics that would provide victory in the growing stalemate of the Western Front in the early winter of 1915.

¹Robert M. Citino, *The Quest for Decisive Victory* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 144.

²John Terraine, *Mons: the Retreat to Victory* (London: Cooper, 1991), 14.

³Tim Travers, *The Killing Ground: The British Army, the Western Front and the Emergence of Modern Warfare, 1900-1918* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1982), 62.

⁴Correlli Barnett, *Britain and Her Army, 1509-1970* (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1970), 371.

⁵Keith Simpson, *The Old Contemptibles* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1981), 32.

⁶Terraine, *Mons*, 27.

⁷Brigadier General J. E. Edmonds, *Official History of the War, Military Operations, France and Belgium 1914* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1928), 29.

⁸Simpson, *Old Contemptibles*, 40.

⁹*Ibid.*, 43.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 45.

¹¹Brian Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College 1854-1914* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972), 286.

¹²*Ibid.*, 307.

- ¹³John Keegan, *The First World War* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 102.
- ¹⁴Simpson, *Old Contemptibles*, 56.
- ¹⁵*Ibid.*, 50-51.
- ¹⁶Keegan, *First World War*, 126.
- ¹⁷*Ibid.*, 127.
- ¹⁸*Ibid.*, 129.
- ¹⁹Barnett, *Britain and Her Army*, 372.
- ²⁰Nikolas Gardner, *Trial by Fire: Command and the British Expeditionary Force in 1914* (Westport: Praeger Productions, 2003), 36.
- ²¹Keegan, *First World War*, 132.
- ²²Gardner, *Trial by Fire*, 44.
- ²³Citino, *Quest for Decisive Victory*, 162.
- ²⁴David G. Chandler, *The Oxford History of the British Army* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 219.
- ²⁵*Ibid.*, 212.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

If the British take advantage of the lessons they learned in this War, and I am afraid they are the only ones who will do so, they can in five years' time put an army in the field that will be able to fight almost any army in the world. . .¹

Joubert Reitz, former Boer Kommando fighter, *Army and Navy Journal* 1902

Between 1902 and 1914, the British Army underwent a radical revolution in military tactics brought about by the poor performance of the forces that deployed to South Africa in 1899. Integrating changes in the strategic environment, advances in technology and new threats, the British developed a unique doctrine that combined both the lessons of the Boer War with the conventions of continental warfare. These changes in doctrine and training created a combat ready force, the Old Contemptibles of the BEF, that by 1914 were the equal of any army in Europe. In 1914, these improvements in the army allowed the BEF to play a crucial role in the defeat of the Schlieffen Plan and the prevention of a quick German victory.

Success

The British Army of this period owed its success primarily to Sir Richard Haldane as Secretary of State for War. Haldane's success lay in his identification of five primary requirements for reform in 1904. First, the war office needed to be reorganized. Second, the British Army needed a General Staff. Third, a grand strategy for the army was needed that encompassed both the needs of the Empire and the coming continental war. Fourth, the reserves needed drastic reorganization. Finally, the army needed to build and train an expeditionary force to fight on the continent. Lord Haldane accomplished the goals he set

out to achieve. As Lord Anglesey in his *A History of the British Cavalry 1816 to 1919*, stated, “All these aims were accomplished to a remarkable degree just in time for the First World War.”²

With the structural changes engineered by Lord Haldane, the British Army reinvented its tactical doctrine and developed a unified doctrine of warfare, be it continental or colonial. The Dominion forces throughout the British Empire agreed to train and fight to this doctrine. The tactics of fire and maneuver, combined arms and equal emphasis on defense and offense represented the lessons learned on the South African veldt during the Boer War. The British adopted and trained on these tactics.

Overall, the British Army transformation from the force embarked on the *Dunottar Castle* in 1899 to the BEF entrenched on the fields around Ypres. The army shook the grip of anti-intellectualism of the Victorian Era and, within fifteen years, fielded an army that stood on equal footing with the best in Europe. The transformation that built the Old Contemptibles of the BEF was unparalleled in British military history.

Roberts and Haig had developed a coherent, though nascent, doctrine in *Combined Training and Field Service Regulations, Part I and II*. The army had trained the new organizations of divisions and corps to fight on the modern battlefield. The Edwardian Army banished the anti-intellectualism that was so prevalent during the Victorian Age. The officer corps became a professional establishment. The Staff College was reborn and attendance increased. The army drastically altered training at all levels to reflect the new realities as seen on South Africa. All these changes and many others occurred in just over ten years.

Failure

Not everything that occurred during the decade before the First World War in the British Army merited praise. The single most important failure of the British Army during the interwar period was not a tactical failure but one of policy. The failure did not affect the BEF, its tactics and its deployment to France in 1914. It did significantly hurt the BEF in 1915 and 1916. The British Military failed to provide for the expansion of the army after the BEF deployed. Kitchener refused to use the Territorial Army for this purpose and instead designed the new army from the regiments of the old. In 1904, the Esher Commission pointed out that:

The true lesson of the war in our opinion is, that no military system will be satisfactory which does not contain powers of expansion outside the limit of regular forces of the crown, whatever that limit may be.³

The key lesson drawn from the Boer War was that the British Army would need a mechanism to increase its size to fight the next war. Even with the reforms of the reserves and the creation of the Territorial Army, Haldane did not create the infrastructure for this kind of expansion. Kitchener and Roberts did not develop the doctrine within the army to train, equip or deploy the follow-on-force. The BEF, small as it was, had prepared well for this conflict. Once the BEF had deployed, the British Army was not prepared to train, equip and field the millions of volunteers of Kitchener's Army that followed. The committee looking into the Boer War in 1904 foresaw the one issue that directly caused many of the problems the British Army encountered later in the First World War.

The realities of economy also heavily limited the reforms of the British Army. Haldane saw that the only path to reform was one that operated under the constraints of the annual estimates. The Royal Navy remained the first line of defense for the empire

and thus it received the lion's share of the military budgets during this period. Economy limited the fielding of new artillery in the British Army. The British saw a need for artillery but as Robert Centino put it:

The British had recognized the importance of the howitzers in the Boer War, and their 1914 division had 18 4.5 inch howitzers, as well as 4 heavy '60-pounders' (120 mm). But the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) went to France with a total of only 89 medium and heavy guns, a total that included 24 old siege guns.⁴

The same constraint applied to machine guns, grenades, high explosive shells and various other pieces of equipment the British saw the need for but were unable to afford. The tactics of the BEF were thus a compromise of economy and tactical soundness.

Conclusion

The lessons of the Boer guided the British Army and its interwar reforms. The doctrine and training from 1902-1914 was a significant improvement over the pre-Boer War colonial doctrine the British had operated under. With Haldane's reforms and Robert's doctrinal base, the British Army built the Old Contemptibles of the BEF. The battles of 1914 showed the BEF was the equal of any European contemporary in quality of its tactics and doctrine. The comparison of the BEF to the other European armies in 1914 does not stand in stark contrast. The BEF performed well but no better or worse than many comparable German or French regular army units did. What does stand in stark contrast is the 1914 BEF with the British expedition to South Africa in 1899. The fifteen years of reform were truly a crucible that built the Old Contemptibles. Without these reforms, the British role in the Great War would have been a true disaster and the German Army may have succeeded not because of a failure on the French part but because of the lack of the BEF of 1914. To paraphrase the Boer Kommando, Joubert

Reitz quoted above; with these reforms in organization and doctrine, the British were able to field an army that was able to fight “any army in the world.”⁵

Questions Raised by Thesis

One significant question arose during the research of this thesis that merits further study but is outside the scope of this thesis. If the British Army adopted a unified doctrine prior to the start of the First World War, and the tactics of this doctrine proved successful during the first six months of the war, why did Kitchener’s New Volunteers not follow these tactics? Kitchener’s history in India showed him to be a reformer and the performance of the Indian Army in First Ypres demonstrated the tactics of the British Army were in practice in Kitchener’s Indian Army. Why then did the new British armies he raised in 1915 and 1916 not follow the tactics of *Field Service Regulations, Part I and II* and *Combined Training*?

¹Colonel John K. Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army 1899-1914* (London: Methuen, 1938), 146.

²The Marquess of Anglesey, *A History of the British Cavalry 1816 to 1919* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1986), 377.

³The Royal Commission, *Report on the War in South Africa* (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1903), 83.

⁴Robert M. Citino, *The Quest for Decisive Victory* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 147.

⁵Dunlop, *Development of the British Army*, 146.

GLOSSARY

Arme Blanche. Term used to refer specifically to the sword and generally to the use of the sword in a cavalry charge. Also often used as a term of reference for cavalry forces in general.

Boers. The Boers were primarily Dutch settlers of South Africa whose native language was Afrikaans, a mix of English and Dutch. By the time of the Boer War in 1899, South Africa was divided into four main regions, Cape Colony, Natal, Orange Free State and the Transvaal. The Transvaal and Orange Free State were both free Boer Republics while the Cape Colony and the Natal were British Colonies. As part of the treaty resolving the earlier war between them, the Boer Republics were not allowed to have a separate foreign policy from the British Colonial Government.

Cardwell System. A system developed and named for Edward Cardwell the Secretary of State for War when it was enacted, by which each battalion deployed overseas in support of the empire was “linked” to a sister battalion on duty in Britain. These two battalions generally originated from a single regiment. The home battalion was responsible for recruiting, training and eventually forwarding of recruits to the forward deployed battalion. The deployed battalion was always maintained at the highest level of fill at the expense of the home battalion. The linked battalion system caused almost as many problems as it solved. Often criticized, both Brodrick and Arnold-Forster attempted to break the army of the Cardwell System. Both failed and the Cardwell System lasted up to the First World War.

Commissariat. Originally, a civilian controlled supply organization supporting the British Army prior to its reorganization after the Crimean War. The Commissariat was a branch of the civilian Department of Treasury. During the Crimean War, logistical problems encountered by the army caused significant problems for the force. After the Crimean War, military offices took over these functions. In 1888, this function was officially renamed the Army Service Corps.

Indian Army. The Indian Mutiny was the impetus for the formation of the Indian Army in 1857 by the British Army. It originally included both British Army units and native Indian units officered by British Army regulars. In 1903, due to reforms by Lord Kitchener, it was renamed the Army of India which was composed of two elements, the British Army in India which were British Army units serving in India; and the Indian Army which were native Indian units officered by expatriate British Officers. The Indian Army had separate regulations and worked directly for the government of India not the War Office in London.

Militia. One of the three elements of the British reserve system prior to the Haldane Reform. The Militia was regionally organized reserves of the British Army prior to the Haldane Reforms that created the Territorial Army.

Mounted Infantry. Developed during the Boer War by the British Army to provide mobility to regular infantry soldiers, they were largely colonial infantry mounted on horseback for mobility but trained to fight on foot. They lacked the training of cavalry and thus the ability to fight while mounted, and to perform reconnaissance/scouting missions.

Old Contemptibles. The name the British Army veterans adopted for themselves after word got out of a comment attributed to Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany. When the Kaiser heard that the BEF was delaying his forces executing the Schlieffen plan, he disparaged the small force as the “contemptible British Army.”

The Reserves. Formed from soldiers who had completed their term of service in the regular army, the reserves were not organized into formations but were instead associated with regular army units which they would round out in time of war.

Splendid Isolation. The foreign policy pursued for most of Queen Victoria’s reign by the British Government. After the Napoleonic Wars, Britain sought to maintain the balance of power intervening in conflicts only to maintain this balance. Britain’s primary focus during this period was on her empire and colonies. Splendid Isolation lasted from 1815 until 1902.

Territorial Army. Considered to be the second line of military defense of the British Army. Organized regionally and administered under the control of local government, after the Haldane Reforms it was organized and trained to the same standard as the regular army.

Volunteers. One of the three elements of the British reserve system prior to the Haldane Reform. The Volunteers were created in 1859 and were the nationally organized reserves of the British Army prior to the Haldane Reforms that created the Territorial Army.

Yeomanry. Organized in 1761 as part of the home guard, the Yeomanry were the cavalry formations of the British reserves that existed prior to its reform in 1906 when these formations became a part of the Territorial Army.

APPENDIX A

KEY FIGURE BIOGRAPHIES

Arnold-Forster, Hugh Oakley: British politician born in 1855. He became the Secretary of State for War in 1904. His arrogance and conceit made his reforms unviable in the British Parliament and he failed to have any lasting impact on the British Army. He died in 1909.

Buller, Sir Redvers Henry: British general born in England in 1839, the son of a Member of Parliament. He joined the army in 1858 serving in Canada and China before assignment in South Africa where he participated in the Kaffir War, the Zulu War and the First Boer War. He later served in the Sudan, Egypt and Ireland. Replaced by Lord Roberts due to his defeat at Colenso, he continued as a subordinate commander of the Natal army. He returned to Aldershot in 1900 where he remained in command until his retirement in 1901. For the remainder of his life he was heavily criticized for his performance in the Boer War. He died in 1908.

French, Lord John Denton Pinkstone: British field marshal born in England in 1852. The son of a Royal Navy Captain, he originally served in the Royal Navy from 1866 until he transferred to the army in 1874. A cavalry officer, he served in the Sudan and South Africa with Lord Kitchener. After the Boer War, he served as commander of the training grounds at Aldershot until 1907 when he became Chief of Staff of the British Army. He remained in this post until the start of the World War I when he took the Imperial Staff and formed the BEF staff with himself as Commander-in-Chief. Replaced as commander of the BEF by Sir Douglas Haig in 1915, he became Commander-in-Chief of the British Home Force where he remained until 1918. He directed the suppression of the Irish Revolt in 1916. In 1918, he became the Lord Lieutenant for Ireland until his retirement in 1921.

Haig, Lord Douglas: British field marshal officer born in Scotland in 1861 to a wealthy distilling family. He served with Lord Kitchener in India, Sudan and South Africa. After the Boer War, he served as Inspector General of Cavalry in India until returning to the War Office in 1906. At the outbreak of the war in 1914, he was commanding the 1st Army Corps. After the Battles of Mons and Ypres, he became Second in Command of the BEF. In 1915, he succeeded Sir John French as Commander-in-Chief of the BEF a position he would keep, despite disasters like the Somme and Passchendaele, until the end of the war. After the war, he served as Commander-in-Chief of home forces until his retirement in 1921. General Pershing referred to him as “the man who won the war”.

Haldane, Richard Burdon, Viscount of: British politician born in Scotland. Educated in Scotland and Germany, he initially made his career as a lawyer. Appointed in 1905 as the Secretary of State for War he would serve in that position for one of the longest terms in British history. After leaving the War Office in 1912, he

served in various other government positions. In 1915, he was forced to leave government service due to allegations of pro-German sympathies. He returned to government service after the war. Later, he served as the head of the University of Bristol and the the University of St Andrews prior to his death in 1928.

Kitchener, Lord Horatio Herbert: British field marshal born in England in 1850. He served in the military from 1870-1910. He had several tours in Sudan, Egypt and India, most famous of which was his second tour to Sudan in 1886 for which he receive his title (Baron Kitchener of Khartoum) and his tour in Egypt in 1898 when he led the victorious British and Egyptian forces at the Battle of Omdurman. In 1899, he accompanied Lord Robert to South Africa as his chief of staff and succeeded him in 1900 as Commander-in-Chief of all British Forces in South Africa. After the war, he served as Commander-in-Chief in India from 1902 to 1909. Later, he was appointed viceroy to Egypt from 1910-1914. Upon declaration of war in August of 1914, Kitchener was appointed Secretary of State for War. He held that post until he died in 1916 on a diplomatic mission to Russia. He had been traveling on the Royal Naval ship, H.M.S. *Hampshire*, when it struck a mine during a violent storm and sank with 643 of the 655 aboard lost at sea. His body was never found.

Roberts, Lord Frederick Sleigh: British field marshal born in India in 1832. The son of a general, he fought in the Indian Mutiny in 1857 and the Afghan War in 1878, where he received his title of Baron Roberts of Kandahar. Between 1883 and 1899, he served as the Governor of Natal, Commander-in-Chief in South Africa, Madras India, and then Ireland. In 1899, he returned to South Africa during the Boer War as Commander-in-Chief of the entire British field army in South Africa. Appointed Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in 1900, he held the post until it was abolished in 1904. He retired in 1905. In 1914, he died of pneumonia in France while visiting Indian troops there.

Roebuck, Sir John Arthur: British Politician born in India in 1801. He is most famous for the Roebuck Commission of 1855, which was responsible for investigating the British Army's poor performance in the Crimean War.

Smith-Dorrien, Horace Lockwood: British general born in England in 1858. Smith-Dorrien, as a young lieutenant, was one of only five British officers to survive the Battle of Isandhlwana during the Zulu War. He served in Egypt and India. He was with Lord Kitchener at Omdurman and during the Boer War. After the war, he served as Adjutant General of the Army and in India as the Division Commander of the 4th Division. In 1907, he returned to England and replaced Sir John French as commander of the training grounds at Aldershot. In 1911, he served as Aide-de-Camp to the King. Initially assigned to command the Home Army at the outbreak of the war, he quickly took over the BEF's Second Army Corps after the unexpected death of its commander. Due to conflicts between French and himself, French replaced him in May 1915. He did not serve any other role for the rest of the war due to poor health. In 1918, he became the Governor of Gibraltar. He

retired from service in 1922. In 1930, he died as a result of an automobile accident.

Woolsey, Garnet Joseph, 1st Viscount: British Field Marshal born in 1833, the son of a British Army officer. Woolsey entered the army in 1852 seeing action throughout the Empire including fighting in Burma, the Crimea, India and China. He served as the British observer in the American Civil War. Woolsey led the relief of Khartoum and was awarded his title as Viscount because of this action. As Assistant Adjutant General under Lord Cardwell, he worked to reform the British Army as part of the Cardwell Reforms. His career culminated as a Field Marshal serving as Commander-in-Chief of the British Army from 1895-1901. He oversaw the appointment of General Buller as the Commander-in-Chief in South Africa at the start of the war. He was replaced by Lord Roberts as Commander-in-Chief of the Army in 1901. His autobiography published in 1903 under the title *The Story of a Soldier's Life*. He died on 26 March 1913.

APPENDIX B

TIMELINE

Table 5. Timeline		
	1868	Edward Cardwell appointed Secretary of State for War
	1879	The Zulu War.
	1880-1	The First Boer War.
	1895	Lord Landsdowne appointed Secretary of State for War.
	1895	Field Marshal Lord Garnet Woolsey appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Army.
	1896	<i>Field Regulation: Infantry Drill, 1896</i> published.
7 October	1899	British Army ordered to mobilize.
9 October	1899	Sir Redvers Buller appointed Commander-in-Chief in South Africa.
11 October	1899	Boer ultimatum expired.
12 October	1899	South African Republic (SAR) invades Natal. Battle of Laing's Nek.
13 October	1899	Mafeking besieged.
15 October	1899	Kimberley besieged.
21 October	1899	Battle of Elandslaagte.
2 November	1899	Ladysmith besieged.
28 November	1899	Battle of Modder River.
10 December	1899	Battle of Stormberg.
11 December	1899	Battle of Magersfontein.
15 December	1899	Battle of Colenso.
18 December	1899	Lord Roberts appointed Commander-in-Chief in South Africa.
24 January	1900	Battle of Spion Kop.
15 February	1900	Relief of Kimberley.

18 February	1900	Battle of Paardeburg.
27 February	1900	Surrender of General Piet Cronje at Paardeburg.
28 February	1900	Relief of Ladysmith.
13 March	1900	British occupation of Bloemfontein.
15 May	1900	Battles of Glencoe and Dundee.
17 May	1900	Relief of Mafeking.
24 May	1900	Annexation of the Orange Free State.
29 May	1900	Battle of Doornkop.
31 May	1900	British occupation of Pretoria.
11-12 June	1900	Battle of Diamond Hill.
30 July	1900	Surrender of General Marthinus Prinsloo in the Brandwater Basin.
1 September	1900	Annexation of the SAR.
13 September	1900	Roberts calls on the Boers to surrender.
29 September	1900	Kitchener succeeds Roberts as Commander-in-Chief in South Africa.
October	1900	Field Marshal Lord Roberts appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Army.
12 November	1900	William St. John Brodrick appointed Secretary of State for War.
28 February	1901	Kitchener and General Louis Botha meet at Middelburg to discuss peace.
15 September	1901	Boer leaders captured in arms, to be banished.
21 September	1901	Property of burghers still fighting, to be sold.
25 January	1902	Dutch Government offers to mediate.
7 March	1902	Battle of Tweebosch.
12 April	1902	Republic peace delegates meet Kitchener at Pretoria.
15 May	1902	Vereeniging Peace Conference opens.
31 May	1902	Conditions of peace agreed.
	1902	<i>Field Regulations: Combined Training, 1902</i> published.
	1902	<i>Field Regulations: Field Artillery Training, 1902</i> published.

	1902	The Royal Commission on the South African War formed (the Eglin Commission.)
6 October	1903	Hugh Oakley Arnold-Forster appointed Secretary of State for War.
	1903	The Commission on Militia and Volunteer Forces formed (the Norfolk Commission.)
	1904	The War Office Reconstruction Committee formed (The Esher Commission.)
10 August	1904	Position of Commander-in-Chief abolished.
10 August	1904	Army Council formed.
11 November	1905	British General Staff formed
	1905	<i>Field Regulations: Infantry Training, 1905</i> published.
10 December	1905	Sir Richard Burdon Haldane appointed Secretary of State for War.
	1907	<i>Field Regulations: Cavalry Training, 1907</i> published.
2 August	1907	Territorial and Reserve Forces Act enacted.
	1908	Officer Training Corps created.
	1908	Territorial Force created.
	1908	Field Marshal William Nicholson appointed first Chief of the Imperial General Staff.
	1909	British General Staff assumes role of Imperial General Staff for all Dominion Armies.
	1909	<i>Field Service Regulations Part I-Operations-1909</i> published.
	1909	<i>Field Service Regulations Part II-Organization and Administration-1909</i> published.
	1909	<i>Field Regulations: Musketry Regulations, 1909</i> published.
12 June	1912	John Edward Seely appointed Secretary of State for War.
	1912	Field Marshal Sir John French appointed Chief of the Imperial General Staff.
	1912	<i>Field Regulations: Engineer Training, 1912</i> published.
	1912	<i>Field Regulations: Cavalry Training, 1912</i> published.
	1912	<i>Field Regulations: Yeomanry and Mounted Rifle Training, 1912</i> published.
	1914	<i>Field Regulations: Field Artillery Training, 1914</i> published.
30 March	1914	Herbert Henry Asquith appointed Secretary of State for War.
28 June	1914	Archduke Ferdinand assassinated.

27 July	1914	British Home Fleets order to disperse after exercises countermanded.
29 July	1914	British Army recalled all regular army officers and men from leave and furlough.
31 July	1914	Russia and Austria authorized full mobilization of their armies.
1 August	1914	France, Belgium and Germany authorized full mobilization of their armies.
1 August	1914	British Government canceled Territorial Army summer training.
2 August	1914	German troops violated Polish, French and Luxemburg borders.
3 August	1914	Germany declared war on France.
4 August	1914	Germany declared war on Belgium and violates the frontier of Belgium.
4 August	1914	The British Government declares war on Germany and mobilizes the British Army.
5 August	1914	Lord Hugh Herbert Kitchener appointed Secretary of State for War.
4-7 August	1914	Britain mobilizes and deploys the BEF to France.
22-23 August	1914	The Battle of Mons.
25 August	1914	The Battle of Le Cateau.
5-10 September	1914	The Battle of the Marne.
13-25 September	1914	The Battle of the Aisne.
19 October-17 November	1914	The Battle of First Ypres.
December	1914	BEF casualties reach 89,000 out of an original force of 110,000.

APPENDIX C

MAPS

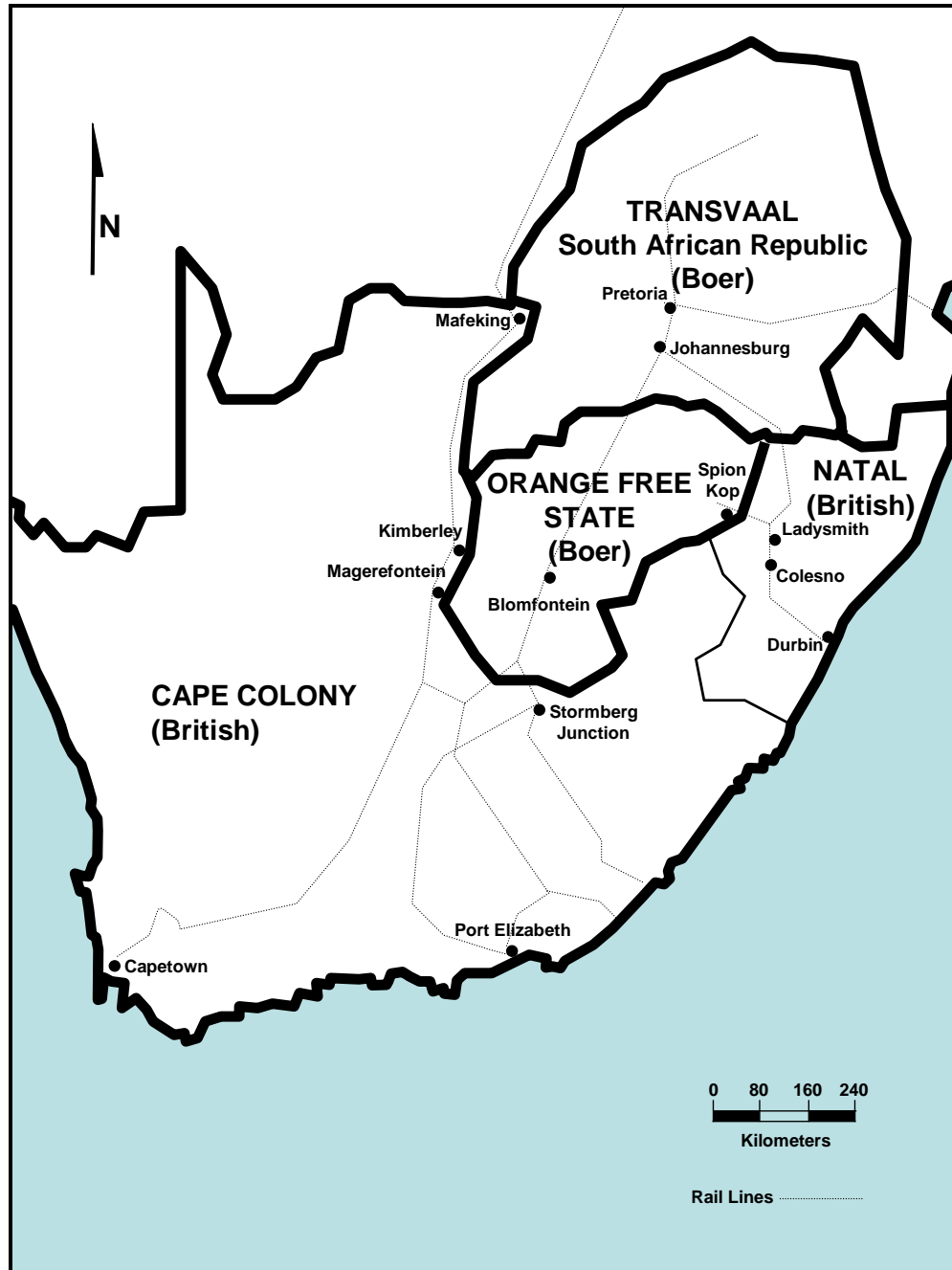


Figure 1. The Boer War: 12 October 1899 to 31 May 1902

Source: Original work with railroad information from Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (New York: Avon Books, 1979), xxx.

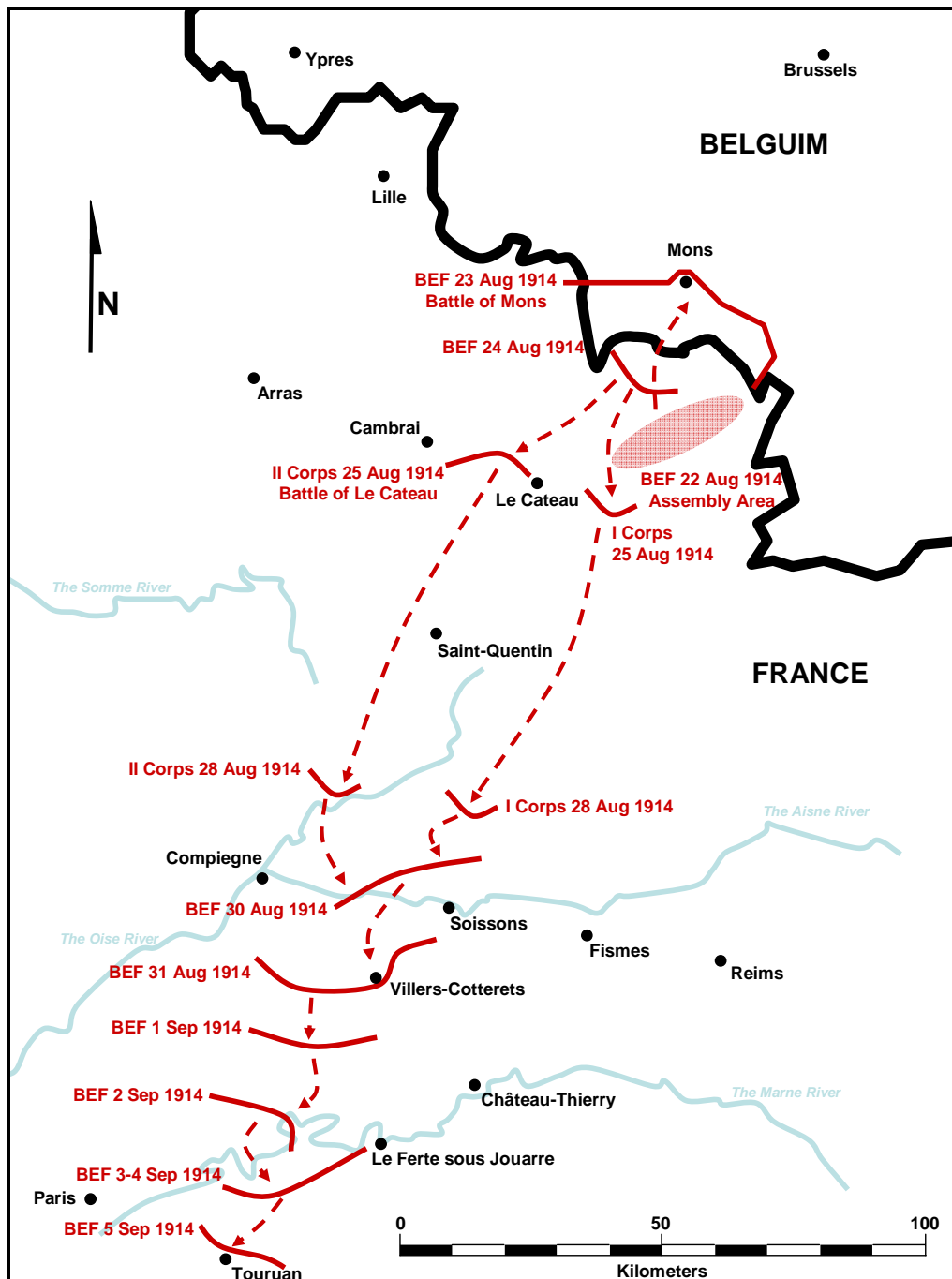


Figure 2. Mons and the Great Retreat: 22 August to 5 September 1914
 Source: Original work with unit locations taken from various maps in the official history: Brigadier General J. E. Edmonds, *Official History of the War, Military Operations, France and Belgium 1914* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1928).

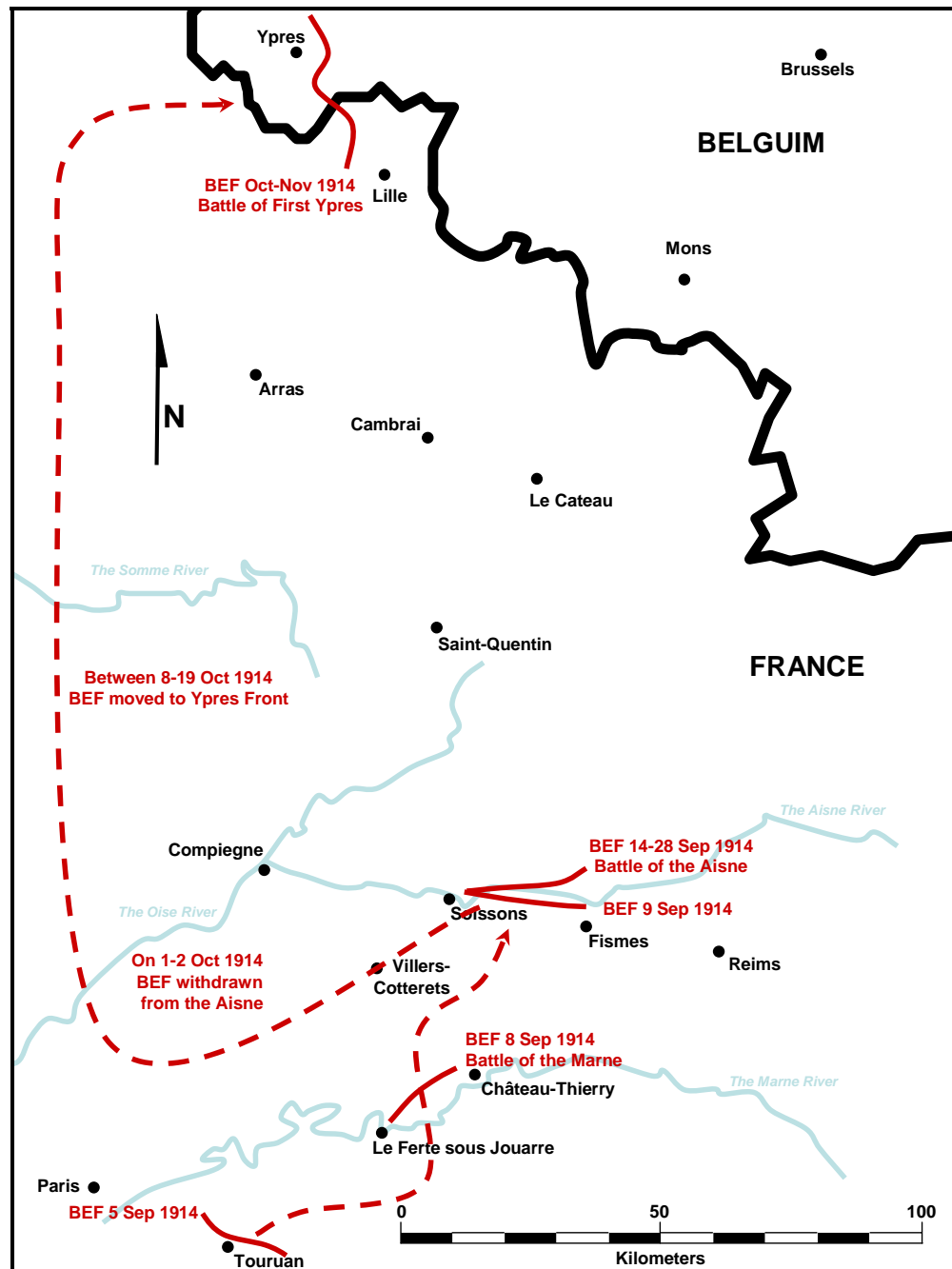


Figure 3. The Marne and the Race to the Sea: 5 September to 11 November 1914
 Source: Original work with unit locations taken from various maps in the official history: Brigadier General J. E. Edmonds, *Official History of the War, Military Operations, France and Belgium 1914* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1928).

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